

A Tertiary Education Plan for Gippsland, Victoria

Discussion paper

August 2011

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1 Chair's letter of introduction

In recent years there has been a number of significant developments in the tertiary education and training environment at both a national and State level.

In 2008, the national agenda was set to sustain more young people in post-school tertiary education destinations. Following the *Review of Australian Higher Education, 2008* (Bradley Review), the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) agreed to the following targets for the educational attainment of the population:

- by 2025, 40 per cent of all Australian 25–35 year-olds will have a bachelor or above qualification
- by 2020, 20 per cent of all undergraduate enrolments will be from low socioeconomic (SES) backgrounds.

In 2009, the Expert Panel *Report advising on the development of the Victorian Tertiary Education Plan* confirmed that there was an appreciable gap in participation and attainment levels between large parts of Melbourne and regional Victoria.

On 21 March 2011, the Hon Peter Hall MLC, Minister for Higher Education and Skills, announced the establishment of an expert panel to develop a Gippsland Tertiary Education Plan to boost tertiary access, participation and attainment to meet future industry and educational needs in the region. I was asked to chair the process and am joined on the panel by Dr Michele Allan and Mr John Mitchell.

Gippsland includes the local government areas of Baw Baw, Bass Coast, East Gippsland, Latrobe City, South Gippsland and Wellington. The region is currently serviced by Monash University, Central Gippsland Institute of TAFE, East Gippsland Institute of TAFE, Chisholm Institute of TAFE and a large number of private Registered Training Organisations (RTOs). There are also many excellent examples of collaboration and partnerships with other universities and industries across Victoria.

There are, however, many barriers to education typical to regional areas. As a result, the number of students accessing higher education in Gippsland is among the lowest rate in the state.

The panel is seeking to actively engage the Gippsland community in preparation of a Tertiary Education Plan for the area. This includes providing a forum for due consideration of local issues, knowledge and insight on factors affecting tertiary education attainment.

In May 2011, the expert panel called for written submissions on how stakeholders across the region see the challenges and issues facing tertiary education in Gippsland and we were delighted with the response. We received a total of 34 submissions from a broad range of interested parties, including universities, TAFE institutes, schools, private RTOs, local government authorities, Local Learning Employment Networks (LLENs), residents, a local business, government departments, and groups and regional committees.

Since the commencement of this plan the shift to a low carbon economy and its potential implication for Gippsland have come to the fore. It will be important for the Gippsland Tertiary Education Plan to consider ways education and training providers can support the likely structural adjustment such as through research, course development and access.

This discussion paper represents the next step in the dialogue on tertiary education provision in Gippsland and presents a number of choices to create more local options that are viable for all students. This will include building on existing partnerships and strengthening articulation arrangements between providers, but it may also involve new arrangements.

Through a series of open and targeted sector consultations, the panel will be seeking to meet with interested parties across Gippsland in August 2011.

By increasing the opportunities for delivering higher education and raising educational aspirations, we will ensure that students are getting the right skills to support strong families, vibrant communities and secure a growing, competitive economy in Gippsland.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Kwong Lee Dow' in a cursive script.

Professor Kwong Lee Dow
Chair, Expert Panel

2 Policy context and objectives

In 2009 Professor Kwong Lee Dow and his Expert Panel delivered a *Report advising on the development of the Victorian Tertiary Education Plan*. This report found that:

- ... the major national growth target (40 per cent of 25–35 year-olds attaining bachelor degrees by 2025) will be achieved in Victoria ... and that Victoria will need a higher attainment, around 47 per cent
- for Victoria, achieving the Australian Government's 'equity target of 20 per cent undergraduate participation from the low SES quartile will prove very challenging'.¹

The report also found that higher education access and attainment is unevenly spread, and related to SES background and location. Participation is lower in outer urban and regional areas.

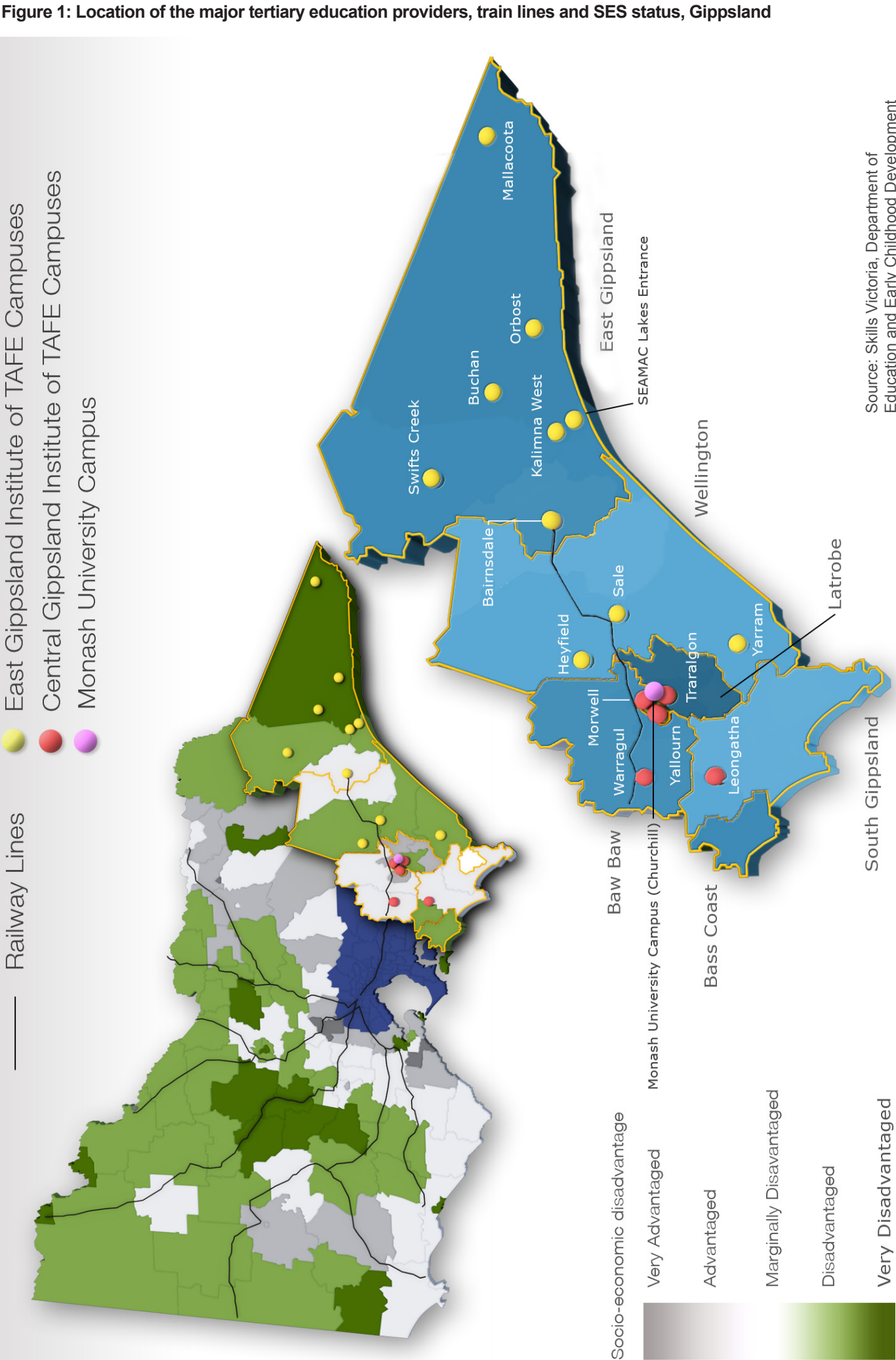
In response to this report an Expert Panel has been appointed to develop a tertiary education plan for Gippsland. The key outcomes for this project, as outlined in the Terms of Reference (Appendix B) are:

1. Improved, more coordinated delivery of tertiary education in the Gippsland region.
2. Improved post school destinations for students, particularly in higher level vocational education and training and higher education.
3. Improved participation in education and training more generally for the community.
4. Identification and rectification of gaps in delivery. This includes gaps in response to employment need and student interest.
5. Preparation of the sector for demand driven funding in both higher education and vocational education and training.

The following map shows the location of the major tertiary education providers, train lines and SES status, for Gippsland.

1. Expert Panel (2009) *Report advising on the development of the Victorian Tertiary Education Plan*, Department of Innovation, Industry and Regional Development, p. 11

TAFE, University and Dual Sector Locations | Gippsland



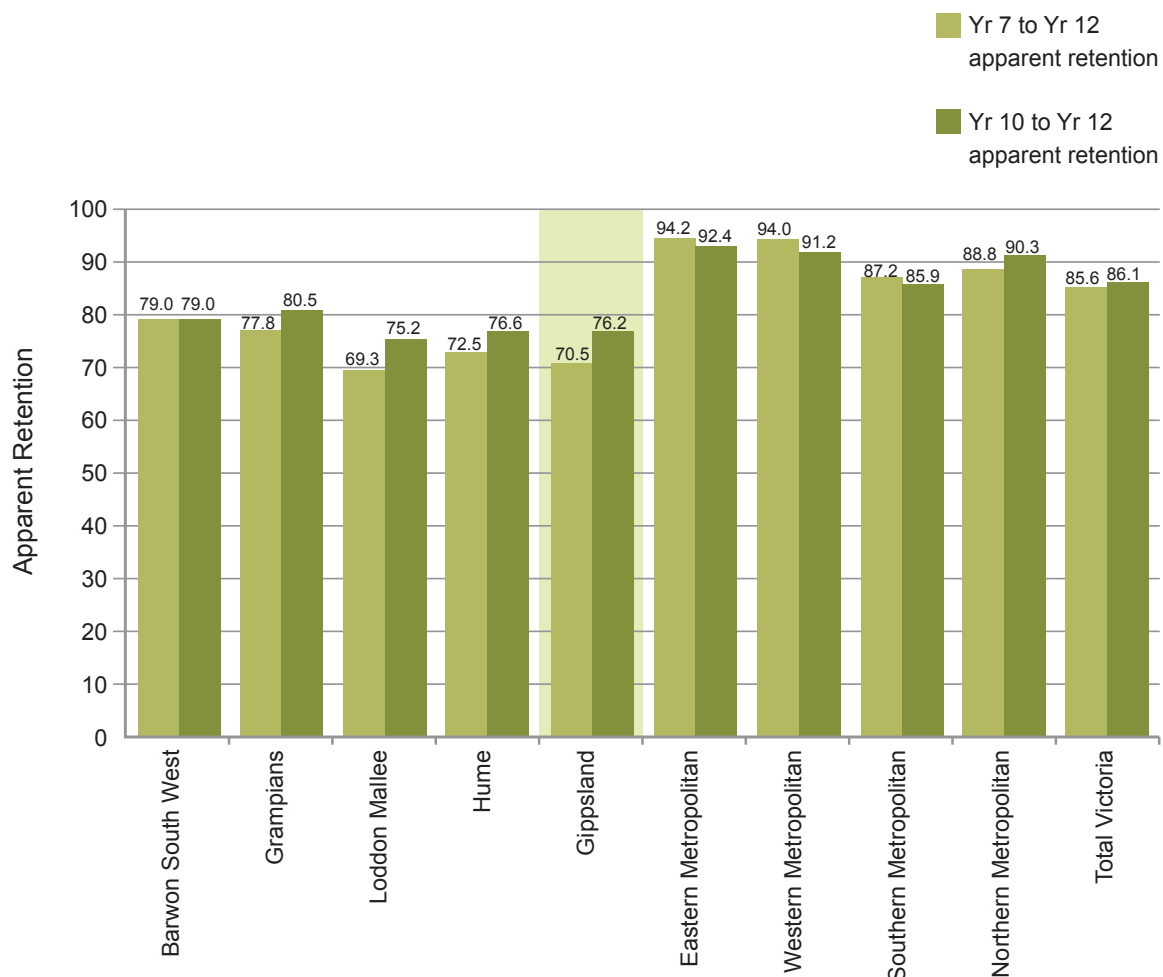
3 The case for change

3.1 School student profile and destinations

School apparent retention rates² are significantly lower in Gippsland than in metropolitan regions. Gippsland has the second lowest retention rate of all regions in Victoria. As shown in Figure 3, only three quarters of students who begin Year 10 progress to the beginning of Year 12.

It is accepted that lower retention rates at Year 12 are a contributing factor to lower levels of participation in post-school education in regional areas.³

Figure 2: Apparent retention rates for Victorian school students by region, 2010



Source: ACER, 2011, *Report providing statistical analysis of the student profile in Gippsland*

2. The number of Year 12 students as a percentage of the number of Year 10 students two years earlier

3. Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (2010), *Regional Participation: The Role of Socioeconomic Status and Access*

Bachelor degree study is the largest post-school destination of students completing Year 12 in Gippsland. However just 34.5 per cent gained a university place in 2010. This is lower than metropolitan regions and most other regional areas. The average for Victoria is 50 per cent.

When compared to other regions in Victoria, students in Gippsland are more likely to be studying at a Certificate I–III level, in an apprenticeship, in part-time employment or looking for work.

Gippsland students have a different Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR)⁴ profile to Melbourne and the rest of Victoria. Applicants within metropolitan areas are more likely to be placed towards the top of the ATAR range, whereas Gippsland has a higher representation of tertiary applicants with an ATAR of 60–69. Monash Gippsland currently has a minimum ATAR of 70.

In 2010, Monash University's Gippsland campus at Churchill was the most frequent destination for Year 12 completers in Gippsland, with a quarter of all students who gained a university place going there.

Other popular destinations included the Clayton campus of Monash University, followed by Deakin University (Burwood campus), La Trobe University (Bundoora campus), the University of Melbourne (Parkville campus) and RMIT Melbourne.⁵

3.2 Employment and population profile

When making comparisons to Melbourne and Victoria as a whole:

- Gippsland has a lower rate of participation in the labour force at 77.4 per cent (Victoria – 80.9 per cent).
- Gippsland has a higher rate of unemployment at 5.9 per cent (Victoria – 4.9 per cent).
- 86 per cent of employed people living in Gippsland also work within the region and almost one third of those do so within the Latrobe Valley.
- Residents working within the region are more likely to have a lower income, with 24.5 per cent in Gippsland earning below \$250 per week (Melbourne – 22.1 per cent; Victoria – 22.2 per cent)
- People employed in Gippsland are likely to be less qualified than those in Melbourne:
 - by 2018, 24 per cent of the Gippsland working population aged between 20 and 59 years are expected to hold a bachelor degree or above, compared with 32 per cent for Melbourne
 - a higher proportion of the Gippsland workforce possesses a Certificate level qualification as their highest qualification, projected to grow to 25 per cent by 2018 (Melbourne – 21 per cent).⁶

Gippsland's population profile points toward the need for action in higher education provision.

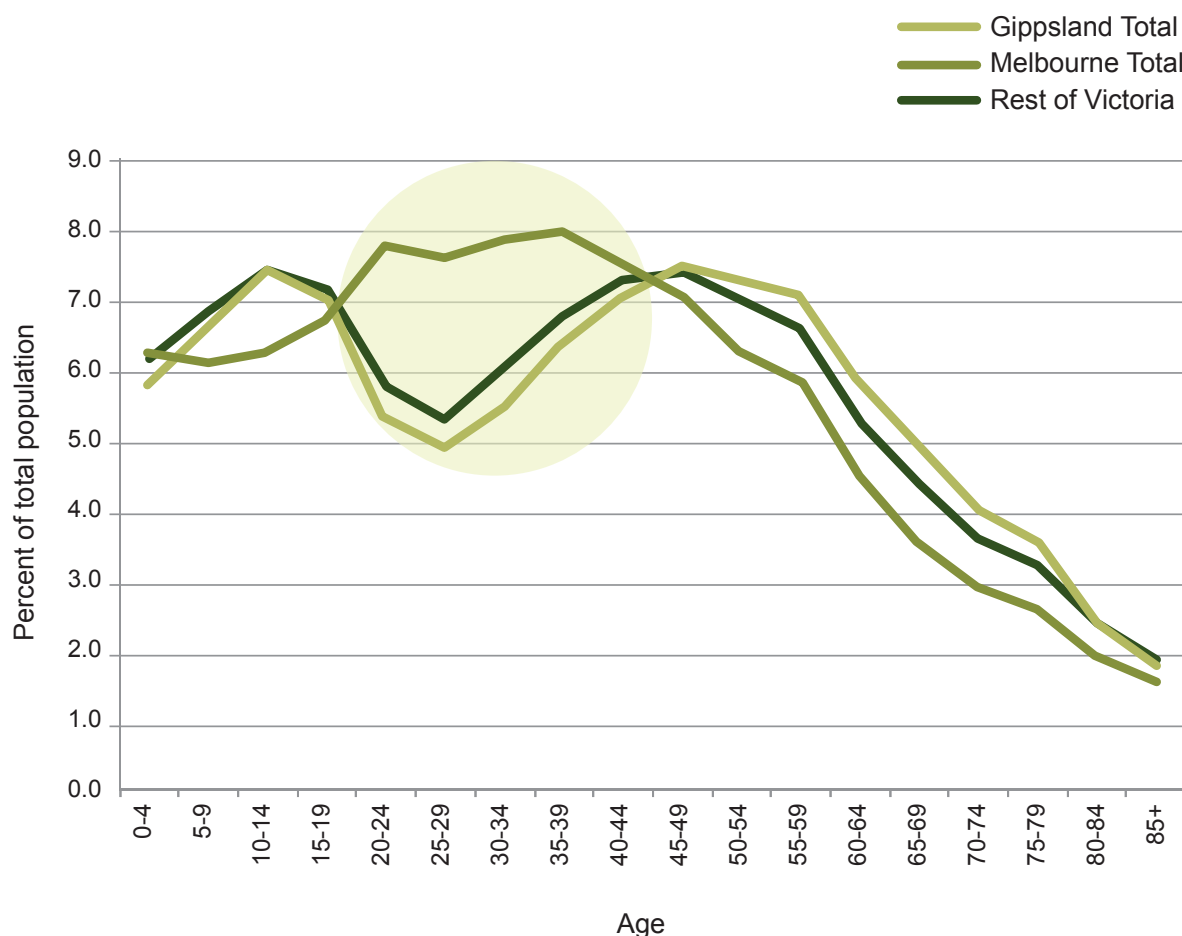
- In 2006, the proportion of 20–40 year-olds in Gippsland was significantly lower than Melbourne and Victoria. The pattern of decline in this age group exists in all local government areas, but is more pronounced in Latrobe City, East Gippsland and South Gippsland shire councils.
- Gippsland has had a decline in the number of people aged between 20 and 40 years old. While this is also seen in Victoria as a whole, the trend is more pronounced in Gippsland (see Figure 3).
- While estimates to 2026 suggest there will be a significant increase in the overall population across Gippsland, Melbourne and Victoria, there is a pattern of decline in the number of 18–22 year-olds in Gippsland.

4. The ATAR score is a measure of a student's academic success in the Year 12 qualification. Reported as a number between 0 and 99.95, the score represents a student's position in relation to that of other students. For example, students who receive an ATAR of 80 are positioned 20 per cent from the top of the student group. The ATAR is calculated for use by tertiary institutions to rank and select school leavers for admission to courses.

5. ACER, 2011, *Report providing statistical analysis of the student profile in Gippsland*

6. Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) (2011), *Report providing statistical analysis of industry, employment and population profile in Gippsland*

Figure 3: Age distribution for Gippsland, Melbourne and the rest of Victoria, 2006



Source: ACER, 2011, *Report providing statistical analysis of industry, employment, and population profile in Gippsland*

While there is some variation between local government areas across the region, the comparisons in employment and population profiles show that Gippsland faces a number of challenges that will affect student participation in tertiary education. In particular, as the number of students from the tertiary age cohort declines, increased participation will need to come from adult learners.

3.3 Industries of the future

In the written submissions the need for additional training capacity and improved collaboration between providers of tertiary education and industry was identified as a major concern in Gippsland.

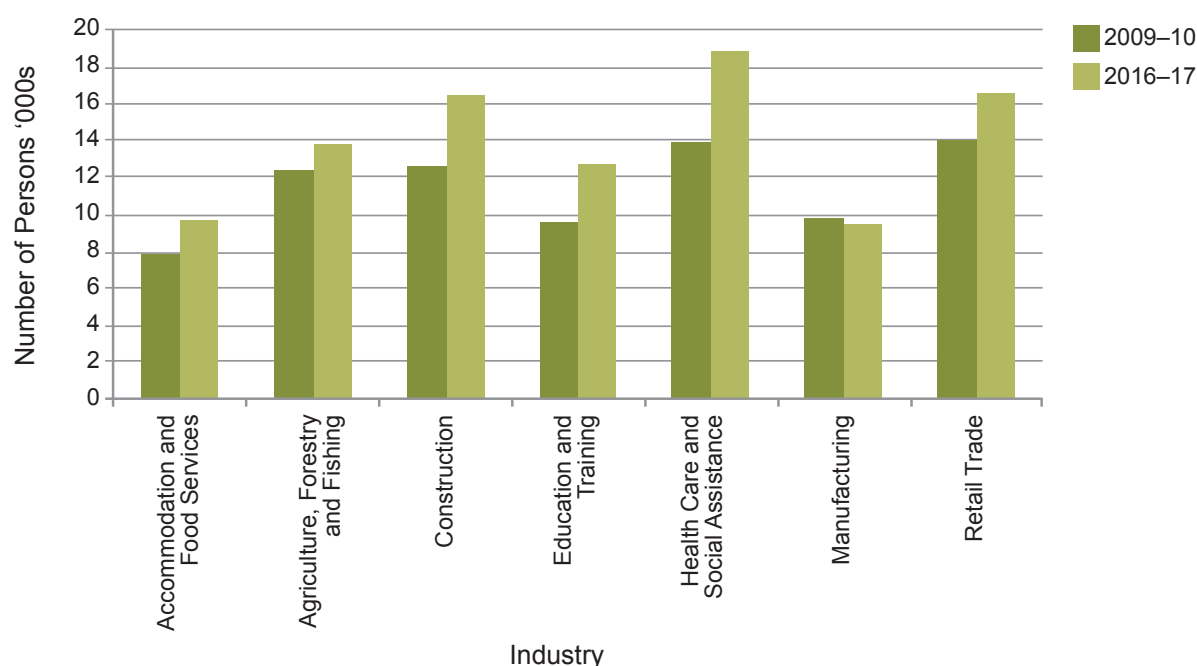
The largest industries by the number of employees in Gippsland during 2006 were retail (across the region), health care and social assistance (prominent in East Gippsland), agriculture, forestry and fishing (South Gippsland), construction (Bass Coast), education and training (Baw Baw), manufacturing (Latrobe) and accommodation and food services (Bass Coast and East Gippsland).

Of these larger industries, growth is projected in all industries with the exception of manufacturing. Notable growth is expected in health care and social assistance, due to the ageing nature of the population in Gippsland.⁷

Since the preparation of this analysis the shift to a low carbon economy has become subject of much greater policy attention and the affects on Gippsland, in particular the Latrobe Valley are likely to be far reaching. A strengthened focus on sustainable energy production, green technologies and green skills, areas identified as important during the submissions focus (outlined below), will require attention from tertiary education providers. The development of a Tertiary Education Plan for Gippsland is an opportunity to assist and shape the education and training response.

7. ACER, 2011, *Report providing statistical analysis of industry, employment and population profiles in Gippsland*

Figure 4: Projected numbers of workers in Gippsland by industry, 2009–10 and 2017–18 ('000s)



Source: ACER, 2011, *Report providing statistical analysis of industry, employment and population profile in Gippsland*

In addition to this analysis, a general view from the submissions received was that future economic development will come from:

- sustainable energy production, green technologies and green skills
- water management
- agribusiness, with a need for qualified workers in automotive, light engineering, refrigeration and other allied trades
- intensive and organic food production
- plantation forestry and timber, including specialist transport
- specialist education
- tourism.

The challenge is to provide for the alignment of the provision of education and the needs of the local industry. Collaborative relationships between TAFE institutes, universities and local industries are critical to establishing meaningful pathways and sustainable economic growth.

3.4 Education attendance rates in Gippsland

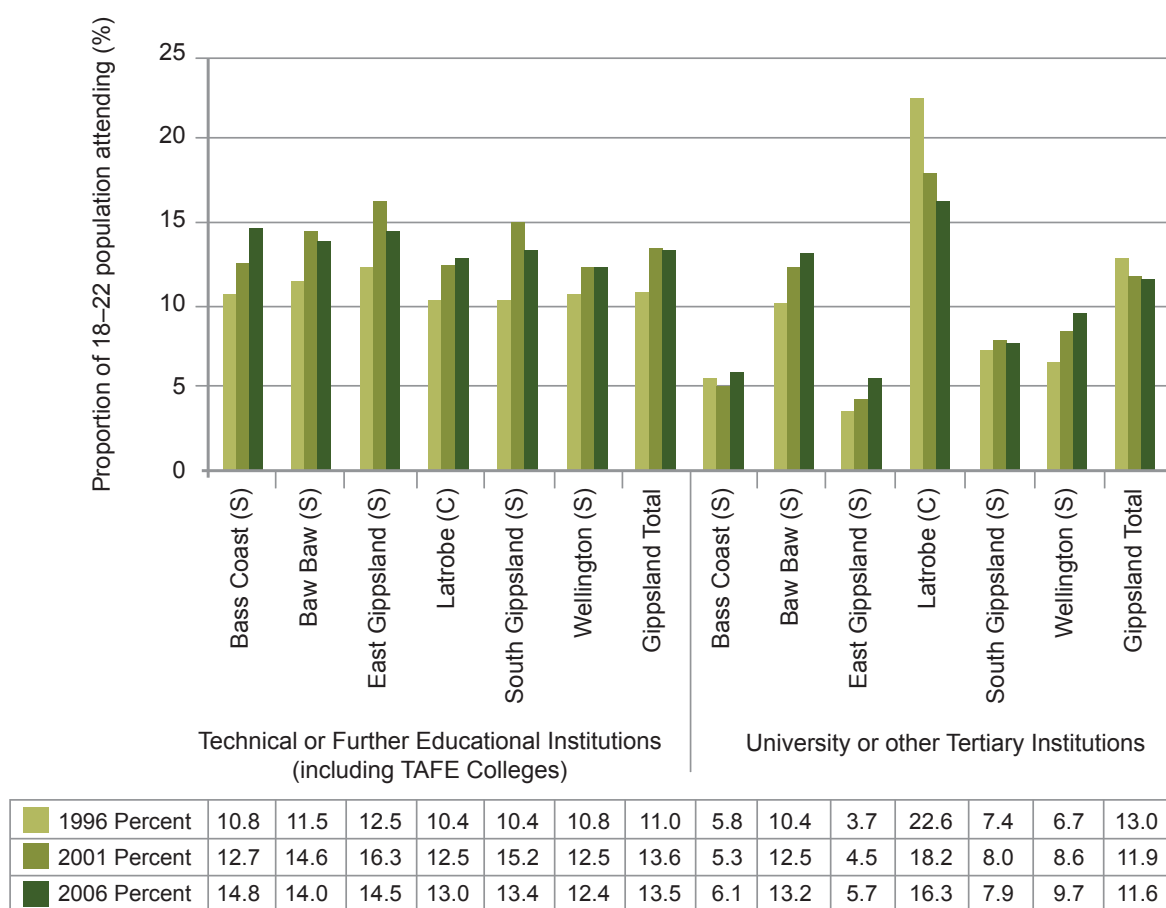
While the actual numbers of 18–22 year-old students enrolled in both TAFE institutes and universities increased respectively across the census years of 1996, 2001 and 2006, the proportion of the population engaged in tertiary education followed a different pattern. In this 18–22 year-old youth cohort there was an overall increase in the proportion of the population enrolled in TAFE over the period. Some local government areas, such as Baw Baw and Wellington saw consecutive growth, where as other local government areas saw rises and falls over the period in the proportion of their young people attending TAFE.

Overall, over the census years of 1996, 2001 and 2006, there was a decline in the proportion of the 18–22 year-old cohort enrolling in university study in Gippsland. This result is due to a large decline in Latrobe City, which outweighs smaller increases in other local government areas across Gippsland. Nonetheless this decline shows that strategies are required to increase aspiration in this age group; to attract and retain young people in the region; and to balance these efforts with a focus on adult learners.

Adult learners are already an important part of tertiary education in Gippsland, making up a substantial proportion of students across the sector. ACER modelling from census data indicates that in the 18–22 year old cohort there are approximately 2,000 TAFE students and 1,850 university students in Gippsland. When this age cohort is expanded to 18–65 years this grows to approximately 4,900 TAFE students and 4,000 university students.

Adult learners have different characteristics from younger students, they are more likely to study part-time and more likely to engage with blended learning, or different delivery models. The needs of adult learners and their motives for attraction to and participation in tertiary education should be carefully considered as part of the Gippsland Tertiary Education Plan.

Figure 5: Proportion of persons aged 18–22 in Gippsland attending a TAFE institute or university for the years 1996, 2001 and 2006, based on ABS figures, by shire/city

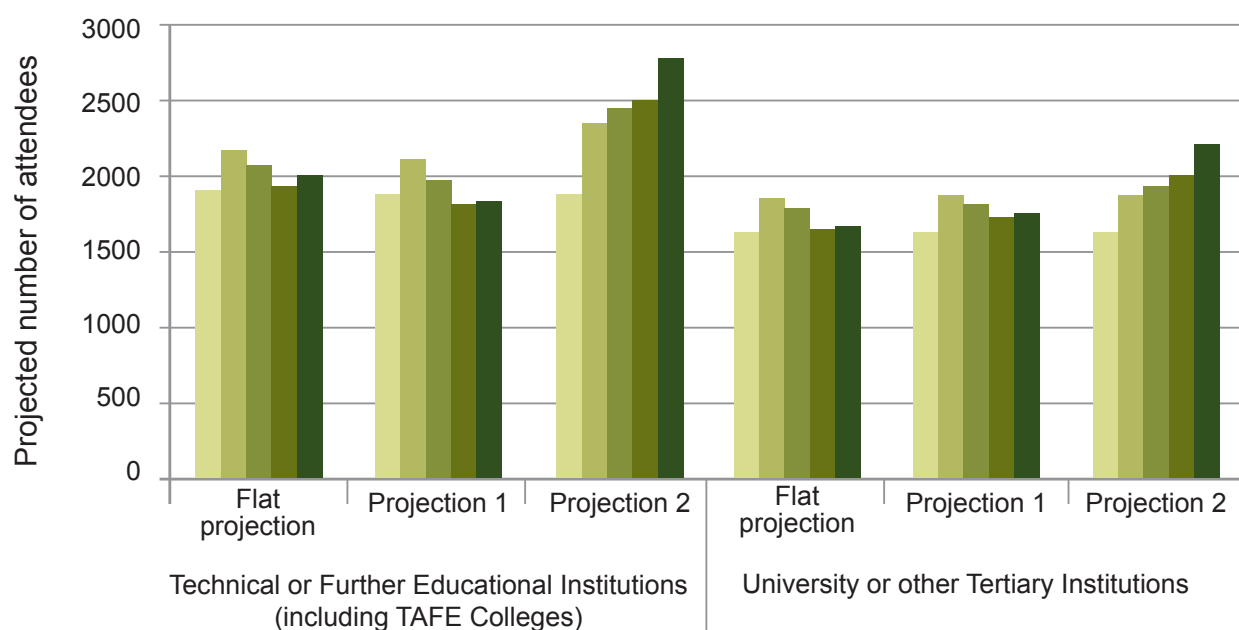


Source: ACER, 2011, *Report providing data towards student projections in Gippsland*

3.5 Projected education attendance rates 2006–26

Analysis undertaken for the expert panel has provided three projections of attendance rates of 18–22 year-olds at TAFE institutes and university and for 18–65 year olds. The modelling is based on historical trends and the projections from the Department of Community Development (DPCD) *Victoria in Future*. The modelling does not seek to predict the future, but rather to provide a projection of likely outcomes if current trends continue.

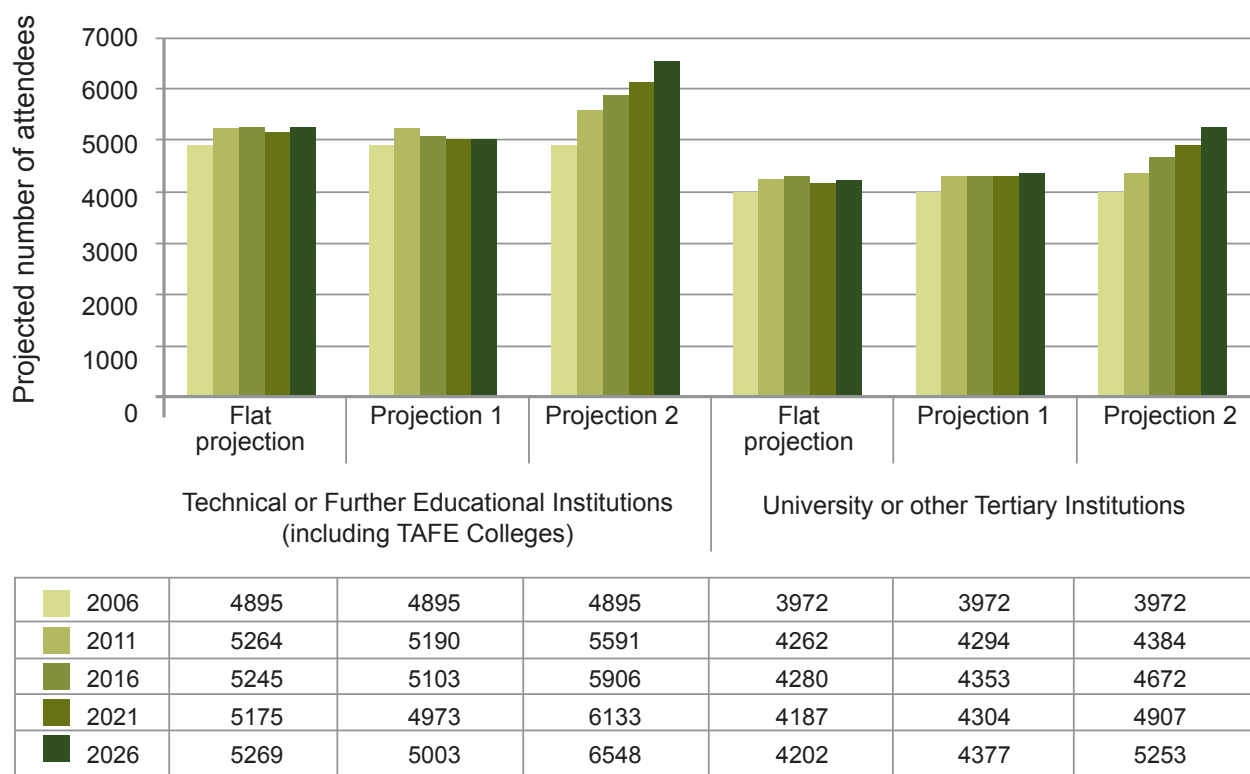
Figure 6: Total projected attendance at TAFE institutes and university for years 2006–2026, for persons aged 18–22 in Gippsland, showing three projections



2006	1909	1909	1909	1654	1654	1654
2011	2181	2136	2381	1872	1892	1892
2016	2087	2002	2472	1807	1847	1976
2021	1971	1850	2518	1680	1747	2033
2026	2028	1863	2779	1690	1790	2241

Source: ACER, 2011, *Report providing data towards student projections in Gippsland*

Figure 7: Total projected attendance at TAFE and University for years 2006–2026, for person aged 18–65 in Gippsland, showing three projections



Source: ACER, 2011, *Report providing data towards student projections in Gippsland*

Flat projection

Based on demographic change only, this projection assumes that the proportion of 18–22 year-old attendees in 2006 will remain stable. In doing so:

- TAFE institute attendance increases to 2011, followed by an apparent decline to 2026
- university attendance also peaks in 2011, followed by a subsequent decline.

Based on demographic change only, this projection assumes that the proportion of 18–65 year-old attendees in 2006 will remain stable. In doing so:

- TAFE institute attendance is relatively stable between 2011 and 2026
- university attendance is relatively stable between 2011 and 2026.

Projection 1

This conservative projection assumes that the proportion of 18–22 year-old attendees rises and falls in line with the 1996, 2001 and 2006 data. In doing so:

- TAFE institute attendance declines considerably between 2011 and 2026, accelerated by the falling population for the age group
- university attendance peaks in 2011 followed by a subsequent decline, with increases in other local government areas offset by the reduction at Latrobe City.

This conservative projection assumes that the proportion of 18–65 year-old attendees rises and falls in line with the 1996, 2001 and 2006 data. In doing so:

- TAFE institute attendance experiences year on year fluctuations but is typically around 5,000 students
- university attendance grows to 4,377 students by 2026.

Projection 2

This optimistic projection assumes the historical fall in TAFE institute attendance between 2001 and 2006 is arrested and builds in an increase in participation in university attendance. In doing so, there is a projected increase in the proportion of 18–22 year-olds at TAFE institutes and university to 2026.

It could be reasonably considered that while these projections are too optimistic for TAFE institutes, the estimate of growth for university attendance is possible.⁸

This scenario produces growth in both TAFE and university attendance for the 18–65 year-old cohort. This scenario projects 18–65 year olds engaged in TAFE in 2026 will reach 6,548 and in universities to reach 5,253.

“The particular challenge in this region is to overcome low levels of aspiration and school completion in a declining 15–19 year-old population.”

8. Source: ACER, 2011, *Report providing data towards student projections in Gippsland*

3.6 Important underlying issues

In the future, as industries change and the numbers of 18–24 year-olds in Gippsland decline, there will be a need to:

- support collaborations between education providers in thin markets
- develop consistent and transparent pathway arrangements between schools, TAFE institutes and universities
- build student and family aspirations and attitude towards tertiary education and ensure that students are adequately prepared for tertiary education
- attract and retain people at student and working ages through focused industry investment in the region
- ensure that employers are adequately prepared to deliver effective education to support and enhance the region in all industry sectors, including the training available to adult learners
- ensure that employees are sufficiently skilled to enhance the region, with particular focus on those industries that are set to emerge or experience significant growth.

3.7 Written submissions to the expert panel

In May 2011, the expert panel called for written submissions on how stakeholders across the region see the challenges and issues facing tertiary education in Gippsland and the possible solutions.

A total of 34 submissions were received from a broad range of interested parties including universities, TAFE institutes, schools and private RTOs, local government authorities, LLENs, residents and a local business, government departments, groups and regional committees.

A synopsis of submissions received (Appendix A) and the panel's terms of reference (Appendix B) are provided.

“Consideration needs to be given to emerging industries, such as energy production and green technologies, in which many existing employees already have a strong skills foundation upon which to build.”

4 The way forward

Access to tertiary education in Gippsland can be improved and this was highlighted by the submissions process. This section provides an overview of ways to increase access, participation and attainment of tertiary education. Options for the way forward can be broadly categorised into two groups:

- Institutional possibilities, focussed on the role of tertiary education providers in responding to local need through partnerships and flexible governance arrangements
- Targeted issues for attention, focussed on areas such as aspiration for tertiary education, engagement of adult learners and industry engagement.

Some of the key themes identified through the submissions process such as pathways, cost of travel and cost of education, can to a large extent be ameliorated by the proposed options for refocussed and expanded tertiary education provision.

These are outlined below and it should be noted that the range of actions and local initiatives presented here are not mutually exclusive.

4.1 Institutional arrangements

A differentiated Monash Gippsland

The Monash University Gippsland campus in Churchill is home to over 2,000 on-campus students, 2,350 off-campus students and nearly 400 staff.⁹ The Gippsland campus of Monash is one of a number of campuses in Australia which includes Clayton, Caulfield, Parkville, Mornington Peninsula and Berwick.

The Monash Churchill campus currently operates under the same processes and procedures that apply for all Monash campuses. The Monash Churchill campus however has some very different characteristics. Monash Churchill is differentiated by its location in regional Victoria and by the students it serves, who, when compared with other Monash campuses, are more likely to be female, mature-age and study part-time.

These differences indicate scope to increase the independence of Monash Churchill campus, expanding and developing into a distinct Monash Gippsland entity. This model would see greater independence for Monash Gippsland to:

- create a distinctly 'Gippsland' higher education provider
- increase local governance arrangements
- increase the development and offering of courses that respond to local need and attract local students
- provide flexibility in ATAR and non ATAR entry requirements
- create greater flexibility to develop guaranteed articulation arrangements and partnerships with local TAFE institutes and RTOs
- develop articulation arrangements with other Monash campuses.

9. <http://www.gippsland.monash.edu.au/campus/overview.html>

A Gippsland university college

A university college¹⁰ as a new entity in Gippsland could:

- be a partnership arrangement between university and TAFE institutes as providers using shared infrastructure
- provide a broader range of tertiary education courses from more locations than are currently available
- allow for a more coordinated and focused delivery
- respond to demographic and economic changes, meeting the needs of the region and attracting regional students
- attract and admit a wider range of students, providing opportunities for those who want to stay in the local area
- provide pathways from schools, TAFE institutes and RTOs
- have a research capacity aligned with the needs of the region, such as a focus on health care and agriculture as growth industries and low carbon/climate change as emerging specialist areas, and undertake research in regional education to identify further opportunities to increase participation
- remain a university college until self-governance is achieved as part of a transition to a standalone university.

The potential pursuit of the differentiated Monash Gippsland and university college models should not be seen as exclusive. Differentiation may actually provide a smoother transition to a university college model by fostering independence and locally responsive expertise.

Location and use of higher education facilities

The location of higher education providers in Gippsland featured in written submissions and included two main suggestions:

- the expansion of the Monash Churchill campus, including student accommodation, which forms part of the Gippsland Regional Plan 2010
- and/or
- boosting delivery in Sale.

Increasing delivery of tertiary education, particularly in Sale, is a logical suggestion. Sale is relatively central, and is connected by public transport and road infrastructure. This could be achieved by standalone facilities, but also by partnership models, which are discussed below in 'Blended Learning Options'.

The expansion of the Monash Churchill campus forms part of the Gippsland Regional Plan 2010. As part of the submissions process other higher education providers have expressed an interest in expanding their physical presence in Gippsland. It may be possible to explore campus sharing with other universities at Churchill and other sites in Gippsland. A campus sharing arrangement would require the support of Monash, but could deliver significant benefits including:

- allowing for possible expansion of degree offerings at the campus in Churchill
- a focus on delivering to low SES, low to mid ATAR students
- the potential to meet an increased range of regional economic needs, including niche areas of expertise and to attract students from across Victoria
- expanded research options with potential to focus on emerging areas of economic need
- new articulation arrangements between local TAFE institutes and higher education.

10. The term 'university college' is used to refer to an institution that provides tertiary education including bachelor degrees and postgraduate courses, but does not have full or independent university status.

Blended learning options

Blended learning in tertiary education seeks to create new ways of engagement and attainment through increased flexibility. Blended learning mixes delivery in a variety of settings, such as a combination of online and face-to-face classroom teaching, with delivery from a range of locations, such as local TAFE institute or local higher education provider. These types of delivery open doors to a greater range of qualifications from a greater range of providers.

Two prominent examples of blended learning in Victoria include those offered by the University of Ballarat and Deakin University.

The University of Ballarat is operating in Gippsland and has a new higher education delivery model for regional Victoria that is based on partnership with regional TAFE institutes.

This would:

- provide access to a range of bachelor degrees through the TAFE institutes based in Gippsland
- allow for the delivery of degrees by TAFE teachers with oversight of course delivery by the university partner for quality assurance
- increase community connectedness with local TAFE institutes
- be matched with a school outreach program.

Deakin at Your Doorstep delivers tertiary education to the associate degree level, equivalent to second year university. Available in a range of disciplines, partners include TAFE institutes across Victoria including the Gippsland region. Deakin at Your Doorstep offers the following benefits:

- a broader course offering through universities which would enable students to commence tertiary education without relocating for the first year
- access to a Deakin University associate degree with an option to progress to a third year at a Deakin campus.
- ensures quality oversight by Deakin University
- course delivery by teachers at TAFE institutes for the first year towards the advanced diploma level
- increased community connectedness with local TAFE institutes
- students be matched with a pilot youth transitions program.

“... a more concentrated and focused approach on regional higher education requires the presence of an institution dedicated to that purpose.”

4.2 Targeted issues for attention

Issue 1 Tertiary education and industry collaboration in Gippsland

Tertiary education delivery in Gippsland faces issues of thin markets and small campuses. In other words there is a small and dispersed population. Despite this, Gippsland has a number of providers, including large private RTOs, two TAFE institutes, a university and many adult and community education (ACE) providers. A theme emerging in the submissions was the need for better collaboration and partnerships. The case was made for collaboration between tertiary education providers and also between tertiary education providers and local industry.

Collaboration between providers would open doors to complementary delivery, greater creation of specialisation and expertise, sharing of content, pathway provision, blended learning (as outlined in section 4) and opportunities for economies of scale. Development of ongoing dialogue between providers as part of the Gippsland Tertiary Education Plan would assist in achieving collaboration and coordination.

Collaboration with local industry is particularly important for Gippsland. The Gippsland community is facing large scale economic change as the economy moves to a low carbon environment. This creates opportunities and threats and there is a role for tertiary education providers to assist with this transition by identifying and focussing on future industries, opportunities for research in partnership with industry and emerging education and training needs.

The Gippsland region is also facing an ageing demographic. This creates opportunities for a research centre and initiatives to focus efforts in the health care and social assistance sector, with a specialisation in aged health care, allied health, mental health, psychology and community health care.

The Gippsland region includes areas of significant agricultural production. Development of research capacity, expertise and specialisation, such as food science pilot plants and an education centre to support the agriculture, forestry and fishing sector may help the local economy reposition to economic change.

The creation of an open, meaningful and collaborative dialogue between tertiary education providers and industry in Gippsland should be encouraged.

“The future for the delivery of tertiary education across Gippsland is based on strong networks that have a collective vision and purpose and which, in turn, will drive innovation, learning and industry development.”

Issue 2 Educational aspirations of students and families in Gippsland

It is clear that low aspiration is a significant issue for the region. This was demonstrated in the number of written submissions that discussed student and family aspirations and attitude towards education as a key concern.

The submissions outline that there is a low educational expectation on the part of families, which may be due in part to the overall low SES and educational attainment in parents.

In this context it is important to promote a learning community that integrates all stakeholders in the future discussions on education in Gippsland.

Initiatives need to go beyond the work of a regional campus and need to be part of the fabric of regional effort and government partnerships.

Submissions indicate that a targeted strategy to raise aspirations and improve awareness could involve:

- school engagement/outreach programs addressing the perception of tertiary education in the primary and secondary school environment
- a mentoring and support program, jointly run by educational providers, that works with students and families to provide support to make a successful transition into the tertiary environment
- improvements to the information available through careers counselling in schools
- reinvigoration of work experience programs between schools and employers, including the opportunity for students to return to the business for graduate programs and apprenticeships
- research to identify specific access and learning needs of Indigenous students and those with special needs, which may include the need for structured support and mentors from TAFE institutes.

Issue 3 Adult learners

As the economic profile in Gippsland changes and the working population ages, an increase in mature-age and later life learners will be required to address the potential for a decline in skills and expertise in the area.

Options to address this issue are:

- additional training and collaborative skills recognition schemes between industry and education providers
- expansion of adult apprenticeship programs, including formal recognition of prior learning
- engaging employers to establish a mix of formal and informal training
- professional mentor programs utilising existing professional experience to attract and retain young professionals
- promotion of rural business opportunities to graduating students.

Issue 4 Programs at Year 11 and 12

An increase in attainment in tertiary education is likely to be influenced by addressing the retention of students through to Year 12. Central to this is the need to minimise deferral and withdrawal from courses at all educational levels.

Written submissions identified the need to address this issue in secondary schools, through:

- open days at university campuses to improve students' preparation for university while in Years 11 and 12
- programs to support and mentor young people
- expansion of cadetships and internships available to students in Gippsland
- building the link between industry and education providers in the region
- awards, scholarships and philanthropic programs. The expansion of scholarship-based programs for tertiary education would address areas of skills shortage, assist Indigenous students and people with disabilities to continue learning
- provide student support during a gap year.

APPENDIX A

Synopsis of written submissions

Collaboration between providers and industry

- There is a need for improved collaboration and mutual commitment between providers of tertiary education and industry when designing and delivering education and training.
- Providers need to work with communities and promote regional business opportunities to graduating students, with existing professionals acting as mentors.
- With the ageing of the working population, industry needs to attract and retain young people in the region through targeted programs.
- Employees need to be skilled to enhance the region, giving consideration to emerging industries such as sustainable energy production and green technologies.

Collaboration between existing providers:

- Higher education providers have an interest in continuing their support for provision of tertiary education in Gippsland.
- Competition between providers spreads enrolments and ultimately affects the viability of courses. A shared view is that there is too much competition between providers of tertiary education in the region.
- Gippsland needs to specialise in industry skills training with education and training providers working cooperatively to develop targeted, industry-specific education and training programs. These would be developed in Gippsland and would have the potential to attract students to the region, as well as being exported to students in other parts of Australia.

A new entity

- Together universities and TAFE institutes provide approximately 85 per cent of the tertiary education opportunities in Gippsland. A number of submissions discussed the need for a new entity in the Gippsland region.
- A single entity could combine the resources, strengths and partnerships of all providers and deliver university courses through TAFE institutes across Gippsland.
- Maintaining a regional presence for metropolitan universities is costly. Region-focused universities can be more flexible and better able to attract regional students.
- A homogeneous entity would overcome many of the barriers students currently face in accessing higher education.

Aspirations and attitudes

- Low aspirations and attitudes towards education in Gippsland are a major concern. Suggested actions to address this included:
 - addressing the perception of tertiary education in the primary and secondary school environment
 - reinvigorating work experience programs to provide students with the opportunity to return to the business for graduate programs and apprenticeships
 - promoting a learning community by building the educational expectations of families and improving career counselling in schools
 - establishing a mentoring and support program.

Pathways

- Current pathways between schools, TAFE institutes and universities are unclear and inaccessible. A coordinated approach is needed to improve pathways between education providers.
- Articulation between vocational and academic pathways needs to be improved to minimise the number of students deferring and withdrawing from courses.
- Expansion of existing models such as Deakin at Your Doorstep would provide a broader offering of courses which would enable students to commence tertiary education without relocating for the first year.
- There is a lack of scholarship-based programs for Indigenous students in tertiary education.

Campus location

- Regional universities have a positive impact on regional centres and accessible student accommodation directly impacts on the participation and retention of regional students.
- Submissions that identified possible geographic delivery solutions were divided between expanding the Monash Churchill campus, which forms part of the Gippsland Regional Plan 2010, or boosting delivery in Sale with particular reference to the University of Ballarat Regional TAFE alliance and Structural Adjustment Fund bid.

Broadband

- Broadband and future connections to the National Broadband Network (NBN) will allow broader education offerings to be brought to students throughout Gippsland.
- Early connectivity to the NBN is critical for the delivery of contemporary education. This may be influenced through collaboration between educational institutions, government and technology providers.

Cost of travel

- The cost of travel and limited access to reliable, affordable and time responsive public transport is a major barrier tertiary education in the Gippsland region.

Cost of education

- As in most areas and regions, the cost of education is a barrier to participation in tertiary education in Gippsland. Relocation and living expenses are major factors; however these issues fall out of the scope of the Gippsland Tertiary Education Plan.

APPENDIX B

Expert Panel's terms of reference

Background and policy settings

Gippsland students are accessing higher education at amongst the lowest rate in the state. 2009 data shows that:

- 26.4 per cent of Gippsland government school students have university as their post school destination, compared to a state average of 41.3 per cent
- 31.3 per cent of all Gippsland school students have university as their post school destination, compared to a state average of 49 per cent
- 17.1 per cent of all Gippsland students defer their university offer, compared to a state average of 9.8 per cent.

The state and federal policy and funding settings for the delivery of tertiary education have changed. Demand driven funding, guided by student choice will be operating across both higher education and vocational education and training from 2012. This change in the funding environment has followed the introduction of targets for higher education. These include:

- 40 per cent of 25 to 34 year olds attaining bachelor degrees by 2025
- 20 per cent undergraduate participation from the low SES quartile.

Key Outcomes

The key outcomes and benefits the Panel should aim to achieve include:

- Improved, more coordinated delivery of tertiary education in the Gippsland region.
- Improved post school destinations for students, particularly in higher level vocational education and training and higher education.
- Improved participation in education and training more generally for the community.
- Identification and rectification of gaps in delivery. This includes gaps in response to employment need and student interest.
- Preparation of the sector for demand driven funding in both higher education and vocational education and training.

Scope

The project includes the local government areas of Baw Baw, Bass Coast, East Gippsland, Latrobe City, South Gippsland and Wellington. This project will:

- Gather baseline information on:
 - the future economic development plans for the region and related skill requirements
 - the current skills profile and educational attainment of the Gippsland population
 - current tertiary education provision throughout the region.
- Identify and consider the factors that impact on tertiary participation and attainment throughout the region.
- Recommend strategies to increase tertiary education opportunities, with reference to:
 - institutional and partnership models to increase access to tertiary education
 - strategies to maximise utilisation of existing public education infrastructure to expand access to tertiary opportunities
 - strategies to maximise access to and utilisation of specialist equipment across the region
 - strategies to leverage investments in broadband to expand the use of technology in teaching and learning
 - policy, regulatory and funding implications of proposals.

Excluded from the scope of this project is early childhood, primary school delivery and the local government area of Cardinia – this is being considered as part of the South East Project being led separately by Professor Kwong Lee Dow.

Process

This project will provide a forum for the Gippsland community to provide input to, and shape the future delivery of tertiary education in their community.

