**Victorian Home Education Advisory Committee**

Meeting 18 (23 April 2021)

**Communiqué**

The eighteenth meeting of the Victorian Home Education Advisory Committee (VHEAC) was held on 23 April 2021. Due to ongoing COVID-19 related restrictions, the meeting was held using video-conferencing technology.

The Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) provided an update on VRQA regulatory activity regarding home education. VHEAC members also discussed a range of issues including the upcoming VHEAC elections, opportunities to mitigate the challenges facing students transitioning from home education to TAFE and accessing funded TAFE places, and progress on the independent evaluation of the *Education and Training Reform Regulations 2017* .

**VRQA Update**

VRQA provided an update on application number for the year to date. The current notification timeframe is approximately 10 days.

VRQA advised of some minor changes to the application form to address problem areas or points of confusion. These include:

* highlighting Applicant 1 as the primary contact through their email address
* adding a note to the end of Part A regarding applicants with other children with an existing registration in order to streamline contact details for all students
* addressing functionality issues caused by PDF
* rectifying formatting issues.

VRQA advised that it will be utilising a contracted administrative support officer position to support the processing of outstanding reviews from the 2020 year period. VHEAC provided comment on the training and oversight for this support officer position.

**VHEAC election**

Three vacancies (two home education representatives and one disability advocate) currently exist for on VHEAC. VHEAC discussed the process of nominations and elections. Nominations for these positions are open to all members of the home education community.

Nominees will be invited to express their interest in standing for election in writing to the VHEAC Secretariat. Nominees will be endorsed by VHEAC and then published on the VHEAC website for consideration by the home schooling community. Members of the home education community will be invited to vote for their preferred candidate through an online election process, which will be open for two weeks from **2 August 2021** via: <https://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/department/structure/Pages/vheac.aspx> .

Home education representatives (and the disability advocate) elected in 2021 will hold tenure for four years from the date of appointment, after which time their positions will be open to election. Membership of VHEAC occurs on a voluntary basis.

**Transition to TAFE**

In order to address the challenges facing students who are seeking to transition from home schooling to TAFE, the Department has identified that a change is needed to the current Ministerial Order (MO 705). Policy guidance, such as the transition from school form and associated documentation to support families and Department staff with understanding the process for home schooling students, can then be amended. The Department will commence this process and update VHEAC on progress.

The Department will also convene an out of session workshop with VHEAC members and relevant policy areas to discuss the ongoing challenge of home schooling students not being able to access TAFE and VET funding.

**Evaluation of home schooling regulations**

The VHEAC subcommittee last met on 25 March to provide input into the review process. The subcommittee discussed defining what success looks like in the review as well exploring some discussion questions put by the independent consultants, Regulatory Impact Solutions.

Regulatory Impact Solutions is currently focussed on designing a voluntary survey for members of the home schooling community to inform its review, with input from the subcommittee. This survey will be sent to 3121 families, including new registrants and those who have experienced a review. Depending on the responses to this survey, Regulatory Impact Solutions may conduct follow up interviews or focus groups with interested parties to gather qualitative responses.

**Review of workplan and forward priorities**

VHEAC reviewed the committee’s workplan and forward agenda to identify ongoing priorities and determine upcoming meeting agenda items.

VHEAC discussed the following:

* Records management and privacy safeguarding
* Merit Protection Training for VHEAC members to enable ongoing participation in VRQA recruitment and selection processes
* Education options and support for victims of family violence
* Home schooling registration options for students who are past the compulsory school age
* Student cards for home educated students.

Enquiries: Contact the VHEAC Secretariat vheac@edumail.vic.gov.au