
VICTORIAN HOME EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

COMMUNIQUE NO. 27: 14 May 2024

The 27th meeting of the Victorian Home Education Advisory Committee (VHEAC) was held on 14 May 2024.

2024 WORKPLAN AND MEMBERSHIP

Members agreed the key priorities for VHEAC in 2024, including discussion on the Disability Royal Commission and inclusive education, and complementary education settings. Home education representatives requested they be consulted on any future changes to the home schooling regulations, which are due to sunset in 2027.

In relation to membership of the home schooling representatives, VHEAC agreed that:

- the 3 members whose terms expired in 2023 (Pavlina McMaster, Ben Clark, Sue Wight) be extended until December 2024
- the 4 members whose terms expire at the end of 2025 (Kirsty James, Megan Fisher, Kamya Foster and Heidi Ryan) be extended until December 2026.
- with the resignation of Faye Coker, this position will remain vacant pending the recruitment of her replacement.

It was also agreed that a panel of current VHEAC home schooling representatives will select replacements for expired members to represent the home schooling community. Applicants for the position/s may include any home educator with a child registered for home schooling.

REGULATORY UPDATE

The Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) provided an update on regulatory activity relating to home schooling. There has been an increase in the number of students being registered for home schooling compared to 2023. The VRQA has identified and is working to address an increase in the number of unregistered schools, which are unauthorised to operate and present safety and educational risks for students. The VRQA and the Home Education Network (HEN) will promote awareness among home educating parents about potential non-compliant home schooling arrangements, such as attending unregistered schools.

UPDATE ON POLICY ISSUES RAISED BY VHEAC

Exemptions for registered home schooling students aged under 17

The department advised that it will be undertaking policy work to develop a new Ministerial Order under the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006*. This will enable registered home schooling students under the age of 17 years to be exempted from home schooling to pursue full-time education or training, or employment, or a combination of these. This follows concerns raised by home education representatives about the lack of consistency and clarity in the process for the consideration of exemptions for home schooling students. The completion of the Ministerial Order is expected to take over 12 months and home education representatives will be consulted as work progresses.

Maintaining registration for home schooling students aged over 18

The department advised that no further action will be undertaken to allow home schooling students over the age of 18 years to maintain their registration for home schooling. The VRQA advised members that students who turn 18 during their existing registration can see out that year as a registered home schooling student.

Access to funded part-time TAFE for home schooled students

The department is investigating the issue of part-time TAFE access for home schooling students, noting the complexity of this issue given the Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions is now responsible for vocational education training (VET). Home education representatives noted this is an equity issue as home schooled students are excluded from access to subsidised TAFE courses, and that undertaking VET in a school environment is not a suitable alternative for all students.

HOME EDUCATION REPRESENTATIVE UPDATE

Home education representatives put forward a proposal for the VRQA to provide pre-registration for students while awaiting approval of home schooling registration. Members also requested greater promotion of HEN as a resource for prospective and registered home educators. The department committed to providing advice on these matters at the next meeting VHEAC meeting.

MEETING ATTENDEES

The May 2024 meeting was attended by the following members:

- Richard Johnson, Executive Director, Planning, Risk and Non-Government Schools, Department of Education (Chair)
- Keith Don, Deputy Chief Executive Officer, Students and Services, VRQA
- Chris O'Sullivan, Manager, Home Schooling Unit, VRQA
- Dr Glenda Jackson, Director, Australian Home Schooling Advisory Service
- Ben Clark, Home Education Representative
- Kirsty James, Home Education Representative
- Pavlina McMaster, Home Education Representative
- Sue Wight, Home Education Representative
- Heidi Ryan, Disability Advocate

ABOUT VHEAC

VHEAC provides guidance, information, and feedback to the department and VRQA on the operation of the home education regulations and on home education matters in Victoria. VHEAC was established in the context of the regulatory changes to home schooling that commenced in Victoria on 1 January 2018.

VHEAC meets at least 3 times each year and a communique is published after each meeting. The department provides secretariat support to VHEAC. Communiques from previous VHEAC meetings can be found online on the department's website at <https://www.vic.gov.au/victorian-home-education-advisory-committee>.

VHEAC SECRETARIAT

Department of Education

Email: vheac@education.vic.gov.au

To receive this information in an accessible format, please contact the VHEAC Secretariat.