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9 JAN 2018

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Ms Pam White PSM
Chair
Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority
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Dear Ms White 

We are pleased to provide the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) with this Statement of Expectations (SOE). The VRQA has an important role in supporting our ambitious Education State reform agenda. This SOE applies from 1 January 2018 to 30 June 2019 unless otherwise amended.

We recognise the VRQA's achievement in meeting the expectations set out in the previous SOE issued on 12 August 2015. The acquittal that has been provided by the Board with the VRQA's actions during 2015–2017 demonstrates substantial achievement.

As Minister for Education and Minister for Training and Skills, we are responsible for administering the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006* (the Act), which provides for a high standard of education and training for all Victorian students, including by setting out the functions and powers of the VRQA. This SOE should be read in the context of the objectives, obligations and functions outlined in the Act.

We expect the VRQA to undertake the full range of functions and powers provided to it in the legislation. The VRQA should continue to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of its regulatory activities by considering ways to improve regulatory practice. This includes reducing the regulatory burden on regulated entities, and in particular multi-sector providers by streamlining the regulatory processes. It also includes continuing to engage with stakeholders to inform the ongoing improvement of its regulatory activities.

In particular, we expect the VRQA to continue to undertake its core responsibilities, including providing clear guidance and support for educational organisations to successfully implement the Child Safe Standards, and to meet the required standards for registration, and working in partnership with all sectors to embed the minimum standards as a core part of school improvement and effective governance.

The VRQA should also continue to strengthen its evidence based approach to regulation and collect relevant data to inform a risk-based approach to allocate resources and effort on activities where the risks are greatest, and to evaluate the outcomes of these approaches.

We expect the VRQA to continue to provide information to regulated entities to improve the transparency of regulatory assessment processes and methodology to reduce non-compliance. This will support providers and clients to understand and comply with their legal and regulatory obligations. We expect that this information will be updated to reflect changes to the regulatory environment and feedback from stakeholders in a timely way.

These expectations and other priorities communicated from us will be incorporated into the VRQA Strategic Plan for 2018–20 and this SOE should be published on the VRQA website on receipt. We expect that by 15 February 2018 the VRQA will outline how it intends to meet these expectations, including details of the specific activities that will be undertaken, and the response will be published on the VRQA website.

Home schooling

A key focus of the VRQA's work over the next two years will be implementing the regulatory changes to home schooling, as outlined in the new Education and Training Reform Regulations 2017 (the 2017 Regulations), which take effect on 1 January 2018. These changes are required to be implemented smoothly and effectively to put in place arrangements that will allow families to focus on providing a quality education that is consistent with the principles set out in s. 1.2.1 of the Act. In implementing these changes, we expect the VRQA to provide high quality customer service to the home schooling community, including through being responsive and engaging, and sharing information. We also expect that the regulatory changes to home schooling will be implemented as efficiently as possible, including that the relevant business systems and processes will be moved online as soon as practicable.

In particular, in response to concerns in the home schooling community about the time it will take to assess an application for home schooling registration, the VRQA must design its processes so that applications are assessed as efficiently as possible. To this end, we expect the VRQA to collect data on the time it takes to assess applications and to provide this data to the Department quarterly. We expect that as assessment becomes well established the number of applications that take less than 28 days (the maximum number of days provided for in the 2017 Regulations) will increase over time. We also expect the VRQA to advise home schooling families of the likely timeframe in which they can expect a decision, and to meet this timeframe.

To help inform the Department's evaluation of the new home schooling regulations in two years' time, we expect the VRQA to develop targets for application assessment times and performance metrics to measure improvements in application assessment times and sector compliance, and to collect data on these metrics. These metrics are set out in Attachment 1.

We understand that the VRQA will expand resources to support home schooling families understand and navigate the new regulatory arrangements to enhance compliance. The VRQA will continue to work closely with the Department in this implementation work, including through its participation on the Victorian Home Education Advisory Committee (VHEAC). We expect that the VRQA will actively consider any feedback provided by the home schooling members of the VHEAC.

Apprenticeships and traineeships

Apprenticeships and traineeships are an essential part of the Government's jobs agenda, providing both skills development and an employment pathway. To ensure quality arrangements, we expect the VRQA to exercise its employer approval powers and enforce employer, apprentice and trainee

obligations. We also expect the VRQA to recognise and monitor Group Training Organisations against National Standards.

We expect the VRQA to determine approved training schemes, with advice through the Victorian Skills Commissioner as appropriate, and improve the secure register of apprentices and trainees, enabling better monitoring and analysis of trends. We expect the VRQA to partner with the Department to: improve completion rates; make the service model easier to negotiate; and deliver the Government's apprenticeship and traineeship reform agenda.

Expulsions reform

Central to achieving the inclusive Education State agenda is ensuring that all students, including those at risk of poor learning outcomes, are supported to stay in education and reach their potential.

The Department is developing a new Ministerial Order to govern expulsions in Victorian government schools in response to the Victorian Ombudsman's investigation into expulsions in Victorian government schools. To support implementation of the Government's expulsions reforms and improve outcomes for students, we expect the VRQA to align its guidance on expulsions policies and procedures in relation to government schools with the new Ministerial Order.

Evaluation

We note that as part of the *Statement of Expectations Framework for Regulators* (the Framework) departmental evaluation of regulatory performance and public reporting against performance targets in the SOE is mandatory. Reporting on your progress to achieve these SOE performance targets should be undertaken in the context of your annual report to avoid duplicating reporting. The Department will lead the evaluation and work with the VRQA to develop the evaluation plan. The evaluation will commence no later than six months prior to the end of the SOE period. We expect the VRQA to work with the Department to undertake the evaluation. In undertaking the evaluation, we expect the VRQA to consult with regulated entities and the broader community as appropriate.

We look forward to seeing the VRQA continue to work towards achieving best practice as a regulator. We acknowledge the critical role that the VRQA plays as the regulator of education and training providers in Victoria.

Kind regards



The Hon James Merlino MP
Deputy Premier
Minister for Education
Minister for Emergency Services



The Hon Jenny Mikakos MP
Acting Minister for Training and Skills

Attachment 1 – Home schooling metrics

The following metrics for the previous quarter should be provided to the Department as part of the VRQA's quarterly briefings on the implementation of the new home schooling regulations:

- the number of home schooling registrations
- the number of home schooling applications received
- the number of incomplete home schooling applications received
- the number of days taken to notify parents that an application is incomplete
- the number of days taken to assess each complete application
- the number of applications that seek an exemption from one or more of the key learning areas
- reasons for families seeking such exemptions
- the number of exemptions granted
- the number of applications refused (and any reasons for refusal)
- the number of registered children reviewed against the benchmark of reviewing 10 per cent of all registered children each year
- the number of registrations cancelled (and the reasons for cancellation)
- the number of VRQA decisions on registration that result in a request for internal review
- the number of VRQA decisions on registration that result in the applicant seeking review in the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal.

