

Gippsland Tertiary Education Plan

Victorian Government Response:
Stronger partnerships, increased
participation – tertiary education in
Gippsland

May 2012



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Minister's Foreword

Gippsland is facing the challenge of unprecedented change. As the regional economy adjusts to a low carbon environment, and as the population ages and grows, challenges will arise, but so too will opportunities. For Gippsland to build on its natural strengths and approach the future with appropriate skills, acumen and confidence, it is critical that the region's tertiary education provision is responsive to its industry requirements and economic development.

Supporting people to train in areas of jobs growth is one of the best ways the Victorian Government can help provide Victorians with opportunities to participate in the workforce. The newly formed Gippsland Tertiary Education Council (the Council) will help achieve this.

The Council will be comprised of individuals with expertise and knowledge of Gippsland's community, industry and education providers. It will provide leadership in the alignment between tertiary education provision and the needs of industry, and influence improved educational participation and attainment in the region. The Council will operate from a strong evidence base and build relationships with the many networks, committees, partnerships and tertiary education providers right across Gippsland and beyond the region's boundaries.

The formation of the Council is a key initiative presented by the Expert Panel in the 2011 Gippsland Tertiary Education Plan. The Plan also makes it clear that for many potential students the cost associated with travel, relocation and accommodation is a major barrier to participation in tertiary education. This shows a need to focus our efforts on reducing the necessity for students to relocate to access tertiary education.

The Victorian Government supports the recommendations presented by the Expert Panel to establish a network of Technology Enabled Learning Centres across Gippsland. Efforts are already underway to ensure that the appropriate technology is available to students, and discussions are taking place with tertiary education providers in Gippsland to consider implementation of these Centres.

Technological advances, including the digital delivery of courses, are already making a positive difference in improving access to vocational education and training (VET) and higher education. Technology Enabled Learning Centres will increase student participation, enabling regional students to access education delivery through a combination of on-line and face-to-face teaching from a range of locations. The Council will provide advice to ensure students from across Gippsland can benefit from developments in flexible education delivery methods. As technology improves, it may be the case that this model for flexible delivery through Technology Enabled Learning Centres is replicated across other parts of regional Victoria.

The Council and the Technology Enabled Learning Centres are initiatives that align well with the Victorian Government's commitment to boosting opportunities for regional students, both school leavers and adult learners, to be able to remain at home while studying. We are also committed to raising aspirations so that regional students, like many of their city counterparts, see higher education as worthwhile and attainable.

The Victorian Government has introduced a range of measures to help boost higher education participation among regional students. One of the most significant of these is the Government's \$20 million Regional Partnership Facilitation Fund. Initiated in 2011, the Fund supports partnerships between universities, TAFEs and other training providers to offer locally based higher education courses. It is encouraging to see innovative partnerships between tertiary education providers in Gippsland arising to take advantage of these opportunities.

Focused attention on these issues, along with improvements to school retention rates, will assist to increase the number of students engaged in post-school learning, and help to provide the skills needed in the Gippsland economy.

I would like to thank Professor Kwong Lee Dow, Dr Michele Allan and Mr John Mitchell for their insight, dedication and commitment in the preparation of the Gippsland Tertiary Education Plan. I was also particularly impressed by the level of enthusiasm demonstrated by the Gippsland community during the Expert Panel's consultations,

and beyond. I am confident that Gippsland can adapt and grow with leadership from the tertiary sector.

I look forward to improved linkages with industry and tertiary education outcomes across Gippsland.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter Hall', with a stylized, cursive script.

The Hon. Peter Hall, MLC

Minister for Higher Education and Skills

Minister responsible for the Teaching Profession

1. Introduction

In December 2011, the Expert Panel, chaired by Professor Kwong Lee Dow, provided the Gippsland Tertiary Education Plan (the Report) to Government. The Report gives valuable insights into the factors affecting tertiary education participation in Gippsland. It makes it clear that as the Gippsland economy adjusts to a low carbon environment, new partnerships and a collaboration of effort will be needed if the region is to seize the opportunities offered by modernised approaches to learning and education provision.

With the restructuring of Gippsland's economic landscape, there is a need to ensure flexible, responsive tertiary education as Gippsland transitions to new and emerging markets. The Expert Panel identified industries within Gippsland that can benefit significantly from closer relationships with tertiary education providers. These industries include primary industries (agriculture, essential services, such as electricity, natural gas, oil and water industries, and forestry and timber harvesting); and service industries (health care and social assistance, tourism and aviation, and education and training).

The demographic changes projected in Gippsland will affect many industries, creating workforce shortages and skills needs. The ageing population will mean more people need to be engaged in education and training, including younger people and older adults. There will also be a need for workers to re-engage in education and training as they transition to new employment or undertake a change in career.

As an important industry in its own right, the expansion of education and training will contribute to the region's economy. The presence of specialist education and research will also influence the progression of other industries in the region.

Gippsland is characterised by large distances, diverse and challenging geography, and comparatively small communities. Tertiary education providers, industry, Local Learning and Employment Networks (LLENs) and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) need to work together to provide the platforms, support and goodwill to overcome difficulties to the delivery of expanded, relevant and accessible tertiary education.

To access opportunities in VET and higher education, it is often necessary for Gippsland students to move away from home. For many potential students of all ages, the cost of travel, relocation and accommodation, is a significant barrier to their participation in tertiary education. Increasing higher education offerings and flexible delivery by aggregating student demand across Gippsland will help to overcome many of these cost issues of the region's "thin" or dispersed education markets.

The profile of students from youth and adult learner cohorts has important implications for the delivery of VET and higher education. It is important that providers operating in Gippsland are able to tailor delivery, adjust their courses, and create new ones to suit local characteristics. This will boost the course profile from outside the region, building a critical mass of students over a longer term to achieve a greater depth and breadth of courses.

Steps in this direction are already underway, with examples of degree programs being delivered through innovative partnerships between TAFE providers and universities based in the region and beyond. For example, these arrangements now include Deakin University and the University of Ballarat. More recently, Monash University, Gippsland Institute of TAFE (GippsTAFE) and East Gippsland Institute of TAFE (Advance TAFE) have formed the Gippsland Tertiary Alliance (GTA). This aims to improve delivery of tertiary education in Gippsland through a collaborative approach to providing critical tertiary infrastructure in the region. The GTA established the Gippsland Integrated Health and Community Education Program which has received a contribution of \$1.5 million from the Victorian Government's Regional Partnerships Facilitation Fund.

The establishment of the Council will extend and support this pattern of collaboration.

2. Gippsland Tertiary Education Council

A ministerially appointed Gippsland Tertiary Education Council (the Council) will be formed. The Council will provide leadership in the alignment between tertiary education provision and the needs of industry and influence improved educational participation and attainment in the region.

The vision of the Council is to:

- expand the capacity of Gippsland's tertiary education providers through a collaborative approach to deliver new and expanded VET and higher education qualifications relevant to local student and industry needs in a modern education environment; and
- facilitate relationships between industry and education providers that result in positive employment outcomes for the Gippsland region and improved productivity outcomes for Gippsland employers.

The Council's scope and key functions will be to:

- increase access to a range of higher education qualifications targeted to future industry needs in a local setting. This will mean aligning education provision with the needs of industry, and allowing workers affected by economic restructuring to re-skill in areas of future growth without leaving the region;
- promote opportunities for project based responses to identified local issues, and leveraging from sources such as the Government's Regional Partnership Facilitation Fund and Industry Transition and Specialist Training Initiative;
- monitor and influence arrangements for delivery of VET and higher education from a wide range of providers and a range of locations across the region;
- monitor and influence arrangements for participation in VET and higher education by major employers and industry;
- work with existing stakeholders and use current evidence and data to influence and encourage partnerships between industry and tertiary education providers. These initiatives will be based on areas of industry need and aimed at supporting and promoting economic growth;
- focus on increased participation in higher education by strengthening partnerships and pathways;
- provide leadership and influence the strategic planning of local providers to ensure their alignment with the needs of industry and assist in the delivery of priority skills and workforce projects for local, State and Commonwealth governments as Gippsland adapts to a low carbon future; and,
- identify and work proactively to promote appropriate tertiary education courses and pathways and accessible delivery methods aligned to the needs of the region.

The Council's priorities will be to:

- ensure that tertiary education in the region is aligned to economic and industry needs and supports regional economic growth. Initially the Council will focus on the skills needs of the priority industry sectors of power generation and mining, food and food manufacturing, education and training, and health and aged care.
- improve rates of individual educational participation and attainment by ensuring accessibility to appropriate education and training, influencing alignment between secondary and tertiary education providers, and influencing alignment between industry and education providers.

The Council will establish a five year strategic plan with key performance indicators (KPIs) linked to growth. The Council will report to the Minister for Higher Education and Skills quarterly regarding progress on KPIs including:

- attainment;
- enrolments;
- participation rates;
- low Socio Economic Status quartile participation rates;
- Aboriginal participation rates;
- attrition or non-completion;
- vocational outcomes; and
- local graduate destinations.

Members of the Council are listed in the appendix. The members will bring the skills, expertise and networks needed to boost tertiary education outcomes in Gippsland. Strong relationships between the Council, tertiary education providers, and employers will assist, identify, and support education and training linked to positive employment and productivity outcomes for Gippsland. Here, there is a positive role for industry to play in informing the Council of relevant course delivery requirements and in providing leadership so that the shared investment of collaborative efforts is of benefit to all parties.

The Council will operate from a strong evidence base, use data to analyse and assess regional industry and demographic characteristics, as well as build strong relationships with LLENs, the DEECD Gippsland Regional Office, and tertiary education providers. It will also work with existing networks across Gippsland to achieve the outcomes of the Latrobe Valley Industry and Employment Roadmap and Latrobe Valley Advantage Fund, including the Skilling the Valley initiative to deliver a range of targeted skills and training supports from 2011 to 2014.

Direct relationships with secondary schools may also be warranted, particularly where greater facilitation and understanding of post school options is needed. These relationships will bring the Council closer to the community and assist with the ongoing identification of barriers to educational participation and attainment, and provide opportunity for solutions based on new tertiary education arrangements.

Beyond its relations with industry, government, and education providers, the Council will need to establish and retain a collaborative relationship with the Gippsland community on broader issues such as planning, transport issues, youth aspirations and influencing the take up of foundation skills training by identifying key areas for educational improvement in the Gippsland community. Within this remit, the underlying focus on solutions, improvements, and education and training will be maintained.

Through the establishment of the Council and the continued strength in relationships between the existing providers, benefits from improved access to tertiary education are expected to flow across the region.

DEECD will initiate a post implementation review of the Council 24 months after its establishment. The review will assess the functioning, composition and effectiveness of the Council.

3. Technology Enabled Learning Centres

The Government will establish a network of Technology Enabled Learning Centres, situated within campuses of existing tertiary education providers at towns and cities across Gippsland.

The use of modern educational technology to deliver better and more accessible services is rapidly expanding. This will be further accelerated by changes in both higher education and VET markets. Through Technology Enabled Learning Centres, student engagement and access to tertiary education provision will be enhanced as study modes become more flexible. This will be achieved through a combination of on-line and face-to-face teaching.

As delivery of courses in specialist areas expands in Gippsland - for example relating to sustainable technologies, education, health care and forestry - these Technology Enabled Learning Centres will provide opportunities to export educational services to other areas of Victoria and Australia. This will expand the horizons of Gippsland's providers and, in the longer term, assist to support the range and diversity of available courses. With access to these Centres, new students will be attracted to study without the need to commute or relocate to participate in tertiary education. Reducing the "tyranny of distance" will allow them to access part-time work while studying, and to enjoy the social benefits of studying closer to family and friends.

Technology Enabled Learning Centres will be flexible learning spaces that facilitate modern education delivery. Students will be able to connect remotely to join other classrooms in real time and the Centres will provide sufficient reach across the entire Gippsland region to ensure access by all students.

While the Council will not be required to manage or oversee the Technology Enabled Learning Centres, there will be a role to play in identifying and recommending delivery of particular courses. Access to the Centres will be available to public and private education and training providers, but the Centres will target providers that have the ability to deliver courses relevant to the needs of local students and industries.

4. Differentiation of Monash Gippsland

Monash University is a valued and respected provider of higher education nationally, and Monash Gippsland is a core component of the economic and educational fabric of Gippsland. Monash provides educational excellence and expertise in a range of areas vital to the broader Gippsland economy, particularly health and education.

The relationship between the Gippsland community and Monash is strong. Within Gippsland, Monash is the local provider of higher education, attracting approximately a quarter of first preferences from Gippsland Year 12 leavers. In all, Monash campuses are the higher education destination for almost half of all Gippsland's young adults.

Following the release of the Gippsland Tertiary Education Plan, Monash University announced a differentiation strategy. This will enable its Gippsland campus to introduce a selected number of new degrees with locally accessible entry requirements.

Additionally, Monash is considering ways to deliver a greater level of autonomy and flexibility for the Gippsland campus. These measures will allow Monash to cater for a greater range of school leavers and to adapt more flexibly to the needs of industry. The Government welcomes these changes and the opportunity for a broader section of the Gippsland community to participate in and attain higher education.

Appendix: Membership of the Gippsland Tertiary Education Council

Peter Veenker, Chair	Chairperson, East Gippsland CMA Board Chair Gippsland Lakes Ministerial Advisory Committee Chair, Statewide Catchment Industry Forum Director, Holmesglen Institute of TAFE Board Self-employed accounting and business consultant Former Chief Executive Officer, Canberra Institute of Technology (1997–2006) and East Gippsland Institute of TAFE (1986–92)
Allan Bawden	Chief Executive Officer, Bass Coast Shire Regional Management Forum Gippsland Regional Plan Leadership Group
Mary Aldred	Executive Director Committee for Gippsland Gippsland Regional Plan Leadership Group (observer)
Richard Elkington	Chair, Regional Development Australia and Power Industry Liaison Gippsland Regional Plan Leadership Group
David Eynon	Chisholm TAFE Board member Executive Director, Air Conditioning and Mechanical Contractors Association Australian Construction Industry Forum ARBS Exhibitions Joint Plumbing Industry Training Fund Redundancy Central Payments Fund
Ian Nethercote	Monash University Council Member Chairman, Monash University Gippsland Advisory Council Chief Executive Officer, Loy Yang Power Chairman, Loy Yang Marketing Management Company MTE Research CSIRO Energy Futures Forum Energy and Transport Sector Advisory Council
Tim Weight	East Gippsland Institute of TAFE Board member, Chair, Building and Facilities Committee, and member of the Audit and Risk Management, Executive and Performance and Remuneration committees Managing Director, Riviera Properties
David Gittins	Board Chair, Central Gippsland Institute of TAFE Managing Director and Dealer Principal, Valley Motor Group
Nicola Watts	East Gippsland Food Cooperative Regional Development Australia – Gippsland
Diane Wilkinson	Former Chief Executive Officer, Gippsland Women's Health Director, DCW Consulting Pty Ltd Associate, Learning Edges Australia Pty Ltd
Michael Giles	Managing Editor, South Gippsland Sentinel-Times Vice-President Victorian Country Press Association (VCPA)