



Disappointment in changes to VCAL coordination funding

24 August, 2011

The Victorian Applied Learning Association (VALA) is extremely concerned about the implications of the Victorian government's announcement late last week to cut funding for VCAL coordination from 2012.

This coordination funding underpins the successful delivery of VCAL within schools and other education providers. Without such funding it is highly likely that a significant number of education providers may stop delivering VCAL due to the demanding and time consuming nature of VCAL delivery. Unlike VCE, VCAL curriculum is very flexible to allow it to be customised to the needs and interests of students. As such it needs to go beyond the use of textbooks in the way it is delivered. In addition, VCAL does not have a high percentage of externally set assessments. VCAL, by its hands on nature, requires extra student support systems, cross subject area planning and organisation, as well as the establishment and maintenance of community and work related links. All this requires coordination above and beyond normal teaching and assessment processes.

As VALA noted in its response to the *Review of VCAL Coordination Funding* 'VCAL Coordination is a complex role'. The VCAL curriculum encourages and, at times, requires, that students undertake projects and work in the community. VCAL Coordinators play a vital role in organising 'the applied learning activities that distinguish VCAL from other programs and enable engaging activities which promote retention'. Our response also acknowledges that the role of VCAL Coordinators needs to be revised and that VCAL providers need to be accountable for the use of the funding.

Due to the success of VCAL there has been a steady growth in the number of students enrolled in it. In 2003 there were 5,137 students enrolled in VCAL at 239 providers (VCAA, 2004). By 2010 there were 19,175 students enrolled in VCAL at 429 providers (VCAA, 2011). Despite the number of VCAL providers having plateaued (as stated in the memo of 18 August to schools), the number of students enrolled in VCAL continues to rise – the 2010 figures being 8.3% higher than in 2009.

The increase in student numbers would indicate that increased funding was required to coordinate VCAL. VALA accepts that increasing funding for VCAL Coordination may not at this time be possible but calls on the government to continue this funding at the current rate for 2012. Failure to do this would jeopardise the current successful delivery of VCAL. Furthermore, a range of alternative funding and support models for 2013 and beyond should be considered. VALA would be happy to contribute to the development of such alternative models.

The changes to funding featured in the Age newspaper of 19th August. See <http://www.theage.com.au/national/education/vocational-squeeze-on-schools-20110818-1j099.html>

For further information about VALA's position or to provide comment, contact: Jan Hagston, Executive Officer, VALA Ph: 9687 0336 Email: jan@vala.asn.au or Linda Mitchell, President VALA, Ph: 0410 441 409.