

# Review of Alternative Education

## Regional Forums – April 2009

## Forum agenda

1.00pm	Purpose, welcome and introductions
1.15pm	Preliminary feedback from as-is analysis and literature review
1.50pm	Small group discussion and feedback to larger group
2.45pm	Afternoon tea
3.00pm	Creating a framework for provision of Alternative Education in future
3.10pm	Small group discussion and feedback to the larger group
4.20pm	Final thoughts and summary
4.30pm	Forum close

## Welcome, purpose and introductions



## Welcome and purpose

- Focus on providing an overview of key review themes to date
- Obtaining key stakeholder views about
  1. Alternative Education in Victoria – what is working well, what could be working better, what can we learn from others?
  2. Good practice in Alternative Education – looking at what is happening in your settings and elsewhere
  3. What’s required to support greater consistency in Alternative Education and quality of outcomes
- Will inform our thinking about the development of a Policy Framework to underpin Alternative Education provision



## Terms of Reference for the Review

- Develop a clear, evidenced based policy framework, to ensure a consistent and sustainable approach to Alternative Education funded by DEECD
- Emphasis on:
  - defined aims and objectives for Alternative Education
  - guidelines for consistency in program delivery – including eligibility, access, funding, accountability and program evaluation
  - ensuring programs are aligned with standards for quality, risk and the broader policy context



## Review methodology

Key activities being undertaken as part of the review include:

1. Desktop research and analysis – currently underway
2. Selected interviews – currently underway
3. Regional forums with key stakeholders – end April - early May 2009
4. Selected site visits – by end April 2009
  - Hands on Learning (Frankston); Netschool (Bendigo); The Pavilion (West Heidelberg); St Luke's (Bendigo); Doveton Heights Teaching Unit
5. Development of review findings and policy framework
  - Presentation of key findings to project Steering Committee
  - Draft Report to DEECD– Mid May
  - Final Report to DEECD – Mid June
6. Develop revised funding model



## About today

- Important opportunity to provide feedback and input into the review process by
  - Principals, Assistant Principals, LLEN representatives, program staff, teachers, student services coordinators, student well being managers and other participants and representatives
- Important in highlighting core issues and future directions for Alternative Education
- Will complement targeted interviews and desk top research
- Robust discussion and debate is encouraged



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## 'As-is' analysis – our process

- Focus on developing understanding of the current status of Alternative Education in Victoria
  - Current policy context and strategic directions for Alternative Education
  - Nature of the Alternative Education Sector
    - Program types and delivery models
    - Target groups, eligibility and access
  - Funding and resource allocation
  - Program governance and accountability systems
- Key steps
  - Identification of key data and information required
  - Provision of key data and information items by Regions and Central Office
  - Review and analysis of desktop information undertaken
  - Identification of key findings



## 'As-is' analysis – our findings

- Findings and themes still of a preliminary nature
- Requirement for input, advice and validation of key stakeholders



## Policy context and strategic directions

- Range of policies provide strategic context for Alternative Education in Victoria:
  - Vulnerable Youth Framework
  - 2008 Blueprint for Education and Early Childhood Development
  - Strengthening student support services directions paper: The Way Forward, 2009
  - Effective Schools are Engaging Schools: Student Engagement Policy Guidelines, 2009
- Offer critical guidance about working with vulnerable and at-risk young people, key priorities for a quality and integrated education system, and the importance of positive and engaging school cultures
- However, no clear framework for Alternative Education, with a lack of clarity re 'what business we are in'



## Nature of the Alternative Education sector

- Sector generally 'grown-up' in response to locally identified need – no planned statewide approach
  - Alternative Education programs funded by DEECD (41 funded through SRP)
  - Range of other programs run by Community Services Organisations, Adult and Community Education settings and also funded by individual schools
  - Community VCAL
- Support offered:**
- Programs and interventions are intensive and short term, although longer term programs are also available
  - Participation can occur within the normal school setting or offsite, however enrolment in school is maintained
  - Schools retain responsibility for ongoing support and involvement with development and implementation of the program
  - Programs are able to offer support to students with the greatest needs by working collaboratively with schools, parents, carers and community agencies



## Client group

- May be experiencing a range of different needs:
  - Behavioural issues
  - Learning challenges
  - School related risk factors. e.g. bullying
  - Non-related school risk factors. e.g. family violence, mental health issues, socio-economic disadvantage
- Often challenging to re-integrate into mainstream school settings
- Data systems identifying the number of students involved in alternative education settings limited



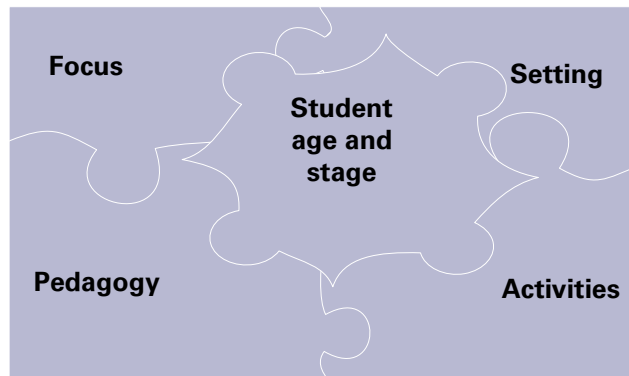
## Eligibility and access

- Lack of consistent statewide guidance on eligibility for Alternative Education
- Rather, eligibility defined by individual programs. Generally relates to one or more of the following attributes:
  - student age and developmental stage
  - behaviour needs
  - educational needs
  - risk or extent of educational disengagement
- Added complexity as students may also be eligible for wide range of other alternatives. e.g. ACE, community schools, programs for students in Out of Home Care (e.g. McKillop Program), School Focussed Youth Services etc



## Models of service delivery

- Conducted a document analysis of programs operating by region
- Suggested that models of service delivery are varied; generally tailored to local need
- Suggests there are five common key elements of programs within which variations exist



## Focus of Alternative Education Programs

- **Educational e.g. literacy and numeracy**
- **Behavioural e.g. socialisation**
- **Resilience e.g. self esteem**
- **Engagement e.g. for older students, link to employment**

## Pedagogy

- Targeted and tailored support
- Individual/ small group work
- Experiential/ hands-on learning



## Student age and stage

**Variations in program elements  
according to age and stage**



## Setting

- **Integrated within school**
- **Co-located and part integrated**
- **Co-located yet independent of school**
- **Away from school**

## Activities

- **Promote cooperative behaviour**
- **Increase self-control/ mastery**
- **Recreational**
- **Skills-focused**
- **Relationships focused**

## Models of service delivery

### Summary

- High level of variation in programs being delivered on the ground
- No common statewide perspective of 'what works'
- Lack of shared 'good practice principles' which guide the development and operation of program models



## Governance arrangements

Existing arrangements:

- DEECD - statewide responsibility for Alternative Education, setting overarching policy and provision of funding to regions
- Regions – manage programs/settings and there is distinct variance in governance, accountability and management arrangements

Overall sense that:

- Statewide governance arrangements are not clearly articulated or documented
- Regional governance arrangements vary widely



## Accountability and quality assurance

- Overall, no statewide mechanism to ensure accountability for funding, quality of services and outcomes for students
- Variation in current accountability and quality assurance mechanisms at the regional level - relates to inconsistency with program governance and delivery arrangements
- As a result, within some regions formal accountability and quality assurance mechanisms may also be limited. May not have:
  - performance measures (output and outcome based)
  - monitoring processes
  - service delivery standards
- Other regions have undertaken formal reviews of program effectiveness and maintain procedures to monitor program funding



## Resource allocation and funding

Overall reflects:

- Historically based funding
- Limited review of funding levels
- No sense of the true cost of service provision
- Multiple funding sources and lack of protocols/coordination to manage these sources
- Limited monitoring and accountability for Alternative Education funding
- Potential for inequity in funding allocation across the regions



## As-is analysis – key strengths in Alternative Education

- Provide tertiary support and intervention to support at risk students
- Programs and models – creates options for continued engagement in education (and re-engagement in mainstream settings)
- Provide support to increase resilience, behaviour management, engagement and increase core competencies (literacy, numeracy)
- Links and partnerships with other relevant services
- Wide variety of programs in Victoria - many provide individualised, flexible, tailored and targeted solutions



## As-is analysis – key challenges

- Lack of consistent definition of Alternative Education – who? what? when? how?
- Variance in governance, eligibility, access, monitoring, review and accountability
- Limited outcome data related to current programs
- Retain flexibility within a consistent and coherent policy framework
- Need for early and accurate identification, intervention and diagnostic testing
- Requirement for strong whole of government response to support and cater for needs of vulnerable youth has potential to increase demand
- Funding and resource allocation is historically based and may not reflect demographic and socio economic characteristics and program location needs



# Literature review



## Literature review – key findings

- Focus on identifying effective models of Alternative Education operating in other jurisdictions. Covered a range of jurisdictions:
  - Australia
  - Canada
  - New Zealand
  - US (selected States)
  - UK
- Dual focus:
  - Service delivery elements – access, eligibility, practice approaches
  - Governance elements – including policy frameworks, roles and responsibilities, accountability, quality assurance and funding
- Identifies elements of good practice which underpin effective approaches



## Key example – Canada

### Student Success Lighthouse Projects

#### Focus:

- Help students who have left school or are disengaging

#### Approach:

- 159 projects funded in 2006-07
- A strategic part of Ontario's Student Success Strategy
- Funding for innovative projects developed by individual school boards
- Enables local problem solving
- Guidelines developed to define the nature of programs eligible for funding

#### Examples:

- N-Gage project
- Aboriginal students alternative learning

#### Good practice features:

- Student focussed approaches, which consider individual strengths
- Developed within local communities
- Strong engagement of parents and communities
- Concurrently, part of systemic strategy aimed at change in culture and practice

#### Outcomes:

- Over 82 per cent of students enrolled in the Lighthouse projects achieved course credits
- In terms of the Student Success Strategy as a whole – 9 per cent increase in students graduating between 2003-04 and 2007 - 08



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## Key example – United Kingdom

### Back on Track – a strategy for modernising alternative provision for young people

#### Focus:

- 2008 White Paper sets an ambitious new vision for Alternative Education
- Focus on *“transforming alternative provision to support early intervention and prevention, improve quality and strengthen accountability”*

#### Elements of the approach:

- Piloting new models to learn ‘what works’ and transfer lessons
- Personalised education plans for students
- Creation of an appropriate curriculum and a national minimum standard of provision
- Use of a more strategic approach to planning and commissioning – supports wider range of providers and innovation
- Publishing performance data to improve accountability for outcomes
- Capacity to replace underperforming providers

#### Good practice features:

- Stronger emphasis on accountability for quality and outcomes
- Emphasis on meeting student needs
- Underpinned by closer partnership between alternative provision and schools, as well as other service providers to facilitate early intervention and integrated support.

#### Outcomes:

- Untested at this point



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## Key example – South Australia

### Approach:

- Regional Innovative Community Action Networks (ICANs)
  - Addressing student engagement with education, employment, training and the community – 12-19 yrs
  - Local community based initiatives tailored to local needs (85 programs statewide) – range of program delivery models
  - Developed in partnership with government and community
- Flexible Learning Options (FLO) model – DECS enrolment strategy delivered through ICAN schools enabling:
  - Individual case management
  - Individualised authentic learning – accredited and articulated into relevant pathways

### Good practice features

- Integrated, joined up, wrap around, individualised service provision
- Both learning and broader needs of young person
- Re-engagement in learning environment *and* support to transition to mainstream education/ employment/ training
- Integration and recognition of flexible approaches in education system structure
- Case management approach
- Flexible program delivery and learning experiences to meet needs

### Outcomes

- Increase in student attendance rate from 50 to 80 per cent (2006 review)
- 93 per cent re-engagement in mainstream pathways 3 months after program completion



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## Key example – South Australia

### Governance

#### Clear links to policy context:

- *Making the Connections – School Retention Action Plan 2003* – Social Inclusion Board
- South Australian Youth Engagement Strategy 2005 – Department of Education and Children's Services

#### Clear governance structure:

- Inter-Ministerial Committee on School Retention
- Chief Executives Coordinating Committee - whole-of-government responsibility for policy implementation
- Regional Innovative Community Action Network Committees – responsible for regional implementation, monitoring and accountability
- Local ICAN Management Committees – program level

#### Policy framework:

- Statewide guiding principles and strategic directions
- Regional strategic plans

#### Monitoring and accountability:

- Statewide data collection and reporting on outputs and outcomes
- External evaluation and review



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## Key example – New Zealand

### Approach:

- Programs targeted at 13-15 yr olds disengaged / alienated from mainstream education with complex and diverse needs not met by mainstream system
- 1,820 places nationally with 3-3,500 transitioning through annually
- Program delivery by individual school, consortium of schools, or community partners/ private providers
- Key program approaches include:
  - Activity Centres – co-located with schools, provide time out from or longer-term alternative to mainstream education for at-risk students
  - Alternative Education programs – range of models tailored to local needs
  - Correspondence School – available where psychological/ psychosocial issues prevent school attendance
- Different settings and learning experiences - increase opportunity for educational achievement



## Key example – New Zealand

### Good practice features

- Clear eligibility criteria for participation
- Flexibility to develop program approaches to local school/ consortium needs
- Case management team established to determine and review eligibility
- Individualised planning for students and tailored program delivery
- Focus on enabling successful re-engagement with mainstream education or other pathways
- Clear guidelines established to support good practice program delivery

### Outcomes

- Review of Alternative Education currently being undertaken (report due March 2009)
- 2001 research undertaken into quality indicators for Alternative Education and quality of service provision but limited outcome data available



## Key example – New Zealand

### Governance:

Governance structure:

- Ministry of Education – statewide responsibility
  - Funding agreements in place with schools for provision of Alternative Education places
- Individual schools or consortiums of schools – responsible for program implementation (direct or through a provider), reporting on program delivery and outcomes
  - Agreements in place with providers
- Clear Alternative Education guidelines in place - clear roles and responsibilities for Ministry of Education, schools, providers

Monitoring and accountability:

- Funding agreements articulate monitoring and accountability arrangements
- Some research and evaluation undertaken though ad hoc



## Key learnings

**1. No one model of Alternative Education** – rather a continuum in terms of degree of variation from mainstream programs in:

- students to staff ratio
- provision of individual education programs, behaviour management programs and other related supports
- length of enrolment
- whether or not it is a school, specialist external provider or other setting

**2. Need for a top down and bottom up approach**

- shared strategic policy direction to Alternative Education
- support for localised, community based and flexible approach

**3. Importance of identifying good practice and disseminating key learnings**

- enables quality, outcomes for students and continuous improvement



## Key learnings

4. **Take a student centred approach** – wrapping services and supports around individual students, their families and communities
5. **Joint governance and partnerships are key** – create clear statewide and regional mechanisms including all stakeholders involved in supporting children and young people at risk of, or experiencing, school disengagement



## Common elements of good practice programs

### Service delivery

- **Focus on early identification and early intervention**
- **Holistic**
  - Comprehensive / wrap-around approach to address the full range of needs and risks that may underpin (or place students at risk of) disengagement from education
  - Focus on providing students with the full range of supports, skills and opportunities required to address developmental (or other life) challenges
- **Flexible**
  - Range of varied programs to provide meaningful options for students, e.g. in terms of focus, setting, pedagogy, activities and age and developmental stage
- **Engages families and support networks:**
  - Adopting a collaborative approach to support the child / young person



## Common elements of good practice programs

### Service delivery

- **Partnership based approaches**
  - Consider alternative education as just 'one part' of the system response
- **Professional, trained and committed staff**
- **Enables effective transition**
  - Recognises that the ultimate aim is return to mainstream schooling or other education / training options
  - Support structures may be required to achieve this
    - Supportive culture within mainstream school settings
    - Advocacy or case worker support (to assist more vulnerable children and young people)
- **Culturally proficient**



## Common elements of good practice programs

### Governance

- **Clear policy framework**
  - Clear vision and mission for Alternative Education
  - Consistent guidelines re eligibility, access, curriculum, and adherence to good practice principles
  - Clear policies and procedure which guide transition in and out of programs
- **Strong accountability for performance**
  - Clear outcome and output based performance measures within service agreements
  - Minimum standards
  - Safeguarding vulnerable children and young people
- **Equity:** in access, resource allocation and funding
- **Sustainability:** building a strong and sustainable Alternative Education sector, with the capacity for innovation and ongoing learning



## Key questions

- What are the strengths of the existing system that have not been highlighted? What have we missed?
- What are the opportunities for improvement with Alternative Education in Victoria?
- Are there elements of good practice in Alternative Education that we may have missed?



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## Creating a framework for future provision

### Will address...

#### Context

- Broader policy agenda
- Good practice in alternative education
- Rationale for change



## Creating a framework for future provision

### Will address...

#### Framework for the future of Alternative Education

- Statement of purpose and objectives
- Outcomes framework
- Underpinning principles
- Educational continuum – where Alternative Education ‘fits’
- Target group
- Governance
  - Roles and responsibilities – statewide, regional, school network, providers
  - Planning - statewide, regional levels
  - Accountability and quality assurance – clarity of expectations, ensuring minimum standards, and consistent performance reporting
  - Funding and resource allocation



## Creating a framework for future provision

### Will address...

#### Approach to Alternative Education provision

- Eligibility
- Access and referral pathways
- Assessment of need and risk
- Individualised planning – for education and other support needs
- Adopting a student centred / family focused approach
- Practice with different student groups – varied approach depending on
  - Age and developmental stage – primary, secondary
  - Educational needs
  - Behavioural problems
  - School related risk factors
  - Nature of non school related risk factors and extent of vulnerability
  - Cultural and Indigenous status



## Creating a framework for future provision

### Will address...

#### Approach to Alternative Education provision

- Enabling transition
  - reintegration into mainstream settings – roles and responsibilities, good practice guidelines
  - transition to other alternatives
- Partnership based approaches
  - Across government (e.g. including DEECD, DHS, DPCD and VicPol)
  - mainstream schools
  - other education and training providers
  - universal, secondary and tertiary services



## Creating a framework for future provision

### Will address...

#### Creating a culture of innovation and learning

- Piloting new approaches
- Ongoing evaluation
- Disseminating learnings and good practice



## Key questions

1. Has anything been missed from the proposed structure for the framework?
2. A clear statement of purpose and objectives will be required to create a shared understanding of what Alternative Education aims to achieve. What should be included in this statement?
3. Most policy frameworks include a set of underpinning principles which define the requirements of a contemporary service system. What are the 5-6 priority principles that should govern Alternative Education in Victoria? Why?
4. Consider both the broader policy context, and the needs of students accessing Alternative Education. What are the critical performance measures against which success of alternative education in Victoria should be assessed?



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## Next steps

- Forums will be completed by 4 May
- Forums being held in
  - Bendigo – 20 April
  - Preston – 21 April
  - Pakenham - 22 April
  - Geelong – 29 April
  - Melbourne - 4 May
- Consultations and desktop review will be completed by early May
- Draft report to DEECD by mid May
- Final report and draft funding model to DEECD by mid June



## Additional feedback in writing

Feedback can be provided in writing to DEECD

- For key review questions  
[www.education.vic.gov.au/healthwellbeing/wellbeing/alternativeprograms.htm](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/healthwellbeing/wellbeing/alternativeprograms.htm)
- To submit responses  
[alternative.education.review@edumail.vic.gov.au](mailto:alternative.education.review@edumail.vic.gov.au)



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**Presenter's contact details**

**Tracey O'Halloran**  
**Project Director**  
**9288 5471 or 0412 294 495**  
**[tohalloran@kpmg.com.au](mailto:tohalloran@kpmg.com.au)**

**Presenter's contact details**

**Sarah Gruner**  
**Manager**  
**9288 5061**  
**[sgruner@kpmg.com.au](mailto:sgruner@kpmg.com.au)**

**Presenter's contact details**

**Pauline Duncan**  
**Project Manager**  
**9288 5929**  
**[pduncan@kpmg.com.au](mailto:pduncan@kpmg.com.au)**



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