Implementing the Blueprint for Victorian Government Schools

"This is the cultural change we need to bring about…it's not about teaching subjects, it's about teaching kids… It's about moving kids from where they are to where they should be."

Lynn Davie, Assistant Principal, Essendon North Primary School

On the morning of 27 November 2003, Darrell Fraser walked into his office at Glen Waverley Secondary College to check his email. His inbox was full of congratulatory messages from fellow principals. It had just been announced, by email to 40,000 Victorian Government school staff, that he had been appointed to the position of head of School Education in the Department of Education and Training. Whilst colleagues in Fraser's school were very supportive of his appointment, it came as a surprise to many people. Without experience in the bureaucracy, observers questioned whether he would be able to lead the ambitious changes outlined in the Blueprint for Government Schools, a key component of which was the Workforce Development Strategy for Teachers. Darrell Fraser was excited by the challenges of his new role, but it was also a daunting prospect.

Victorian government school education

School-age children in Victoria, as in the rest of Australia, are educated in three types of schools – Government, Catholic and Independent schools. Of the 2314 schools operating in Victoria, 70 percent were Government schools – which educated about 65 percent of the roughly 830,000 students across the state.

Government schools varied significantly in size and scope. The sector was comprised of 1222 primary schools, 50 Prep-12 schools (primary and secondary), 261 secondary schools, 80 special schools and 4 language schools. Small rural primary schools could have fewer than 30 students, while some large secondary schools had more than 3,000.[1]

Some schools offered the entire curriculum for their students, whilst others "specialised" or offered a reduced curriculum (*Exhibit A*).

The Victorian Government school sector employed around 38,000 full-time equivalent teachers. The teaching workforce in Victoria, as in most parts of the world, had become increasingly feminised but, at the same time, saw an under-representation of women in leadership roles. In addition, schools had an ageing teaching workforce that would create workforce supply challenges in the next five to ten years.

Schools in the Victorian Government sector operated in a self-managing environment. This means that decision-making responsibility in key areas resided with the school principal and/or school council. Decisions that were taken at this level included delivery of curricula, financial management, facilities management and, importantly, major human resource (HR) decisions. These HR decisions included hiring and firing, the number and types of staff deployed in a school, and the way they were utilised and managed.

Supporting and overseeing schools was the central Department of Education and Training (DET). Historically, DET was responsible for management of the school budgets, staffing and many other decisions now taken at the school level. In 2003, the main responsibilities of the Department in relation to Government schools included allocation of system resources across the schools, ensuring the provision of a safe and effective learning environment and high quality curriculum delivery and improving, monitoring and reporting on the performance of individual Government schools.[2] In addition to the central offices in Spring Street, Melbourne, there were nine regions with corresponding regional offices and regional directors (RDs). The primary role of the regional offices was to support schools in improving and responding to the Government's Reform Agenda.[3]

Changes in the education sector

When the *Education Act* was passed in 1872, education became compulsory for all children aged six to fifteen. The Act prescribed a course of free instruction, which covered subjects such as reading, writing, arithmetic, grammar and needlework, and underpinned the establishment of the primary school system. A series of inquiries and Royal Commissions into the effectiveness of the education system later led to the founding of technical and secondary education systems. The early 1940s saw the rise of multipurpose "high schools" which taught a range of courses in the one school. During the 1970s, strong teacher unions forced the abolition of the system of school and teacher inspections.[4]

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[1] Department of Education & Training, *Summary Statistics for Victorian Schools*, March 2005, p1
[2] Department of Education and Training website, School Education, http://www.det.vic.gov.au/det/schooled/default.htm
[3] ibid, Organisational Charts, http://www.det.vic.gov.au/det/about/structur.htm
[4] ibid, History of Victoria's Education, http://www.det.vic.gov.au/det/schooled/history.htm

Major reform of the school sector was again undertaken when the Kennett Coalition Government came to power in 1992. Significant changes made by the coalition (1992-1999) included over 350 school closures and a large reduction in the number of teachers (around 8000 positions were eliminated).[5] The "Schools of the Future" program gave school leaders control over the school budget and responsibility for allocating resources (including teachers). Accompanied by an "accountability framework", the program was designed to deliver better decisions and outcomes for each school community.

The Bracks Labor Government took office with the support of three independents in October 1999, following the surprise defeat of the Kennett coalition government. Many in the media had described the policy-making approach during the first term of the Bracks government as "steady as she goes". With the second election victory in 2002 and a solid majority, the Premier and his Cabinet now had a clear mandate for change. On 9 December 2002, the Government announced key personnel changes within DET. Jennifer Westacott, then Executive Director of the Office of Housing in the Department of Human Services, was appointed to the position of Secretary of DET. Kim Bannikoff, then Director of the Office and Training and Tertiary Education (OTTE), was appointed as Director of School Education.[6] The media touted the appointments as the beginning of significant reform in education, heralding "sweeping changes".[7]

The Workforce Development Strategy for Teachers

By early 2003, DET had identified, and was pursuing, three strategic directions to bring about "major educational system enhancements"[8]: school effectiveness and improvement, curriculum reform and workforce development. In April 2003, DET commissioned The Boston Consulting Group (BCG) to work on a Workforce Development Strategy (WDS) for Teachers in Victorian Government Schools. This would inform the development of the Bracks Government's vision for schools in Victoria as well as provide a strategic perspective to the upcoming enterprise bargaining negotiations with the Australian Education Union and relevant principal associations.[9] The need for such a strategy had been discussed at the highest levels in the Department and across the central agencies of the Department of Premier and Cabinet and the Department of Treasury and Finance. BCG's final report was due to be delivered in August.

However, before work got underway, there had already been a significant personnel change within DET. By March 2003, Jennifer Westacott had already resigned, her

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[5] Bantick, C. 'Doyle is wrong on education', *The Age*, 16/11/2002.

[6] 'New Environment Department to be established', Premier of Victoria News Archive, 9/122002 www.premier.vic.gov.au/newsroom

[7] Bradley, S. 'Education – Putsch and shove boosts reform', *The Age*, 11/12/2002

[8] Department of Education and Training, Tender specification: 02/03-71

[9] Enterprise Bargaining Agreements (EBAs) with many public sector employees, such as the Police, nurses and teachers, were due for renewal by the end of 2003. Teachers in the Government school sector were covered by the Victorian branch of the Australian Education Union (AEU). Whilst most observers agreed that union membership had declined significantly since the 1970s, the unions were still highly influential in schools. Negotiations between DET and the AEU were expected to commence in May 2003. In October 2003, the AEU was due to hold elections for key offices; it was understood that the President, Mary Bluett, and her leadership team would be seeking re-election to their offices. The key principals' associations – the Victorian Primary Principals Association (VPPA) and the Victorian Association of Secondary School Principals (VASSP) – were also involved in the EBA negotiations.

tenure as the Secretary of DET having lasted less than four months. She cited personal reasons for her decision, having accepted an offer to return to New South Wales.[10] Grant Hehir was appointed as her replacement. With a background in public sector management and policy development, his prior positions included Deputy Secretary of the Budget and Financial Management Division of the Department of Treasury and Finance.

When Hehir took on the role of Secretary of DET, he saw three key issues in the operation of Government schools. The first was "making sure that the framework for funding schools was sustainable". This would require reshaping of the funding model for schools, work that was already underway, as well as resolving some of the "budgetary issues" in the Department itself. He launched an internal project within DET to deliver the required cost savings and restructure the Department. The second issue for the Secretary was re-negotiating the Enterprise Bargaining Agreement (EBA). The Government wanted to ensure that "the outcome of the EBA was financially sustainable" and positioned the sector for workforce reform. The third issue was that the Government's position on the school sector had not been clearly articulated. Hehir described the challenge: "In the three years since the election of the Labor Government, it's fair to say that we hadn't put in place any specific view of what we meant by Government schools…there was a view that was propounded by the previous government. The [Bracks] government came in and…tinkered with it but hadn't made a clear statement of what Victorian Government schools…meant under this government."

On 28 May 2003, Lynne Kosky, Minister for Education and Training, announced plans to reform Victoria's education system. Minister Kosky presented a case for reform and articulated the aims of such a program:

> "It will be about: pursuing improved educational outcomes for all students; moving the whole system forward, but it's also about lifting the tail; making schools with high performance even better, and removing complacency from schools whose outcomes are remaining static; and providing better support for our schools, and getting the most out of the government's investment by effectively managing government funding to both government and non-government schools."[11]

She outlined four areas of focus for reform - curriculum, school improvement, workforce development and teacher learning, and excellence and innovation[12] - and the establishment of Leadership Groups to consider how best to meet the challenges in each of these areas. The Leadership Groups, comprised of teachers and principals as well as leading educational thinkers, would be responsible for developing a number of options to be presented to the Minister in August. Minister Kosky saw that the "the work of these groups will be crucial in ensuring that our reforms are achievable, sensible and well grounded in best education practice."[13] Information collated from these, and other sources would form the basis of the Blueprint for Victorian Government Schools.

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[10] 'Premier announces new Department head', Premier of Victoria News Archive, 10/4/2003, www.premier.vic.gov.au/newsroom/
[11] Department of Education and Training, Victoria, *Framework for Reform*, speech delivered by Lynne Kosky, Minster for Education and Training, 28/5/2003, www.det.vic.gov.au/det/resources/framework.htm
[12] ibid.
[13] ibid.

Further changes within DET occurred shortly after the announcement. In July 2003, the Director of Schools, Kim Bannikoff resigned, accepting a job in Queensland. Press reports at the time speculated that the reasons for Bannikoff's resignation included conflict with the Education Minister and Departmental Secretary, Grant Hehir.[14] The Australian Education Union's Victorian branch president, Mary Bluett, told the press: "One has to ask what's happening in the department. We've now had two directors and three secretaries in the space of seven months. It's very destabilising for schools."[15] Michael Kane, a deputy Director, was appointed as acting Director of Schools whilst a permanent replacement was sought.

On August 13, an email was sent to all central and regional staff in DET announcing the new structure of the Department (*Exhibit B*). It would comprise five separate offices: the Office of School Education, the Office of Learning and Teaching, the Office of Training and Tertiary Education, the Office of Finance, Strategy and Resources, and the Office of Portfolio Integration. The email stated that the potential impact on staff positions was unclear, and that the Department's leadership team would develop plans to realign staff with the new structure.[16] However, the next day, media reports suggested that up to 300 jobs would be cut as part of the restructuring.[17]

Teaching in Victorian Government schools

In some respects, Victorian government schools have not changed significantly in the last 100 years. Groups of students (classes) are still taught by a teacher in a classroom. Students move around between classes, classrooms and often teachers according to a strict timetable divided into a set number of periods in each day. Tests and examinations are still a common method for assessing students.

Jan Lake, Regional Director of the Southern Metropolitan region, described the typical experience for teachers in secondary schools. "The average teacher would, depending on how significant the industrial agreement is in their school and how much they would be bound by that,… expect to have an allotment of kids around a particular subject or discipline. The students that they're dealing with in any one day or across a week might be from Year 7 to Year 12, because we basically still organise students in age level groupings. And they would generally be moving around from one small physical space to another." Lynn Davie, Assistant Principal – Teaching and Learning at Essendon North Primary School, described the situation at the school when she arrived 8 years ago:

> "When I started at this school, things were very different. There were platforms out the front, teachers stood on the platform and delivered a very 'drill and kill' type curriculum. Kids were in rows and there was a reading scheme out the front of each classroom door of what level those kids in that room were at. The teachers had no professional development and they just filled the kids up with knowledge. The plus was that all of those teachers actually liked kids and liked teaching. That was at the core."

"The old culture was pretty much 'I've got something to teach, I teach it and it's somehow up to the students to make the most of what I'm delivering," added Jan Lake.

[14]Tomazin, F. and Guy, R. 'Key schools man quits amid row', *The Age*, 17/7/2003
[15] ibid.
[16] DET email, "*New Structure for the Department of Education & Training*", 13 August 2003
[17] Tomazin, F. 'Up to 300 face axe in education', *The Age*, 14/8/2003.

"There are sectoral differences we have to acknowledge – what I've just described is far more prevalent in our secondary system of schools than it is in primary…There is the classic saying that if you ask a primary teacher what they teach, the primary teacher will generally say Grade Four students and the secondary teacher will most likely say maths or history." Much of this had stemmed from the way teachers themselves had been trained, as DET Secretary Grant Hehir explained:

> "Teachers were taught themselves in a standardised way, and [schools operated within] a highly industrialised framework… the regional inspector would come around once a year, sit in the classroom and mark the performance of the teacher on the day… After that, the door was locked; the individual professional knew best how to deal with their class…That's not acceptable to us as a model of education any more. The inspector no longer exists, the door might still be shut but go to a modern school and there's glass everywhere. There's a principal who wanders in and provides feedback and mentoring…The world is changing dramatically."

These changes had been underpinned by a general shift in attitudes towards education and the role and function of teachers. Said Hehir:

> "The community used to expect that every kid who went to a school got the same curriculum, the same teachers, a teacher with 30 kids or 40 kids in the classroom and they taught the class…that was when I went to school…and it was like that 20 years ago back to 100 years ago…it was about teachers teaching the class. Now it's about teachers teaching individuals. We've gone from a factory approach to education, to an individual approach to education. Class sizes are smaller but the demands on teachers are much broader because they're not actually standing up in front of the class and teaching a group…we expect them to tailor what they do to the individuals…"

Many in the schools sector pointed to substantial change, both at individual schools and more broadly across the sector. But like significant transformational change in other organisations, they still found it hard to describe the "new model" for school education. As Jan Lake put it: "transformation is continuously evolving, meeting needs, using data – it is those mechanisms that lead to transformation, to whatever it leads to…"

It was easier to describe characteristics of the "transformed school" and point to schools that were relatively advanced in their transition to this state (*Exhibit C*). As Jan Lake remarked, "Very few schools are probably at the point that we can say – they epitomise all that we are aiming for…but we've got schools that are definitely getting there. That's why I say that we are in transition." Others described a continuum from the traditional model to the new transformed model with all the 1600 schools at different places on it. Said Grant Hehir: "You can go into schools where they are very open, you can see teachers…learning from each other, outside the school they talk about…their work in terms of what they want to achieve…Then you go into other schools…and some of them are quite defeated and think there are a whole pile of external factors that prevent them from being successful…there's a broad spectrum."

Grant Hehir explained his vision for the sector and the culture that he would like to achieve in terms of three elements. Firstly, he wanted to see strong relationships between all participants in the school system; parents, students, teachers and school leaders in order to foster effective communication within and between schools. He also wanted to see parts of the educational system move from being focused on the process of education rather than outcomes, ensuring that "schools are about kids,…not about

teachers". Some changes had already been made in terms of the funding model which now concentrated on dollars spent per student rather than teachers per student, taking a student's individual needs into account. Lastly, he also sought greater accountability from schools themselves:

> "We've got, we believe, the most devolved government education system in the world given the amount of authority to operate the schools at the school level…and that's not something we want to move away from, because it's a strength of our system. But in handing off so much responsibility and decision-making to schools, to the leadership of schools, we want to build a culture where they understand that…they can't just do what they want…but have a responsibility back to the system for the outcomes that they achieve and the feedback on what's working for them…that's not an optional part of the culture…But it's reciprocal responsibility since the regional offices for example have the responsibility to support the schools and school leaders…that's part of the culture that we want to build."

However, at the same time, Hehir did not want to mandate standard practices across all 1600 schools. "We're not after building a single organisation, a big monolithic factory, we're about diversity…"

Obstacles to change

Those who had been part of, or close to, successful changes in schools commented on several challenges in achieving them. The first was resistance from the community, particularly parents. Lynn Davie observed that the experience of teachers at Essendon North Primary School was that "parents who had attended the school wanted their kids to have the same experience as they had – meaning at the same desk, in the same room, with the same teacher, doing the same things". To overcome this resistance, the school worked with the local community to articulate what the future would look like for the children and therefore how the school needed to prepare the kids for that future.

The nature of teaching itself also made change demanding, for school leaders and individual teachers. "Teaching is a very personal craft. …and to challenge people's view of what good practice is, is a challenge on a very personal level. Teaching is who they are…telling them that 'who they are' is inadequate is extremely challenging" said Darrell Fraser. Added Grant Hehir:

> "We've got a workforce which is highly dedicated and committed to achieving outcomes, to making a difference for students. It's one which comes from a tradition of thinking of itself as a profession…Individuals think of themselves as being professionals, and therefore they should operate individually rather than in teams; it's sort of a view of the independent artisan type perspective, rather than a modern professional as part of a professional team, with professional learning. That's not actually consistent across schools. As the culture has moved quite a bit in recent decades, if you go into some of our more effective schools, there are…professional development teams but there's a continuum of that from where it doesn't happen at all…right through to the highly effective schools who are looking outward all the time…"

In some cases, challenging teachers' thinking about their practice could lead to loss of confidence and in other cases, noted Jan Lake, result in denial of any personal responsibility. "In terms of the people that I have dealt with, overwhelmingly they want

the best for their kids. But when your best efforts don't produce results, the reasons are seen to be in the students rather than seeing it as: 'We haven't yet found the key to connecting with that student'." She also observed that, "…many, many teachers and principals have viewed the quest for school improvement as criticism of what they're currently doing or that they don't have the skills and competencies any more. So that's at the very negative end for possible outcomes of what we are doing…people losing their confidence that they've got the skills and capabilities to actually make a contribution."

Some also saw that the responses of teachers to increased accountability (for example, measurement of outcomes, sharing of performance data and performance management) had had an impact on the nature of schools and openness to change. "Instead of looking at accountability as a positive, how can we use data to improve things for our kids, learning for our kids, it's seen as something it's something for 'them in town'. It becomes a negative…rather than a positive. It's seen as an interruption to the learning, rather than part of the process," said Lynn Davie. Collecting and interpreting performance data was a contentious issue in an environment "where there is a general reluctance to admit publicly that not all teachers are equal."[18]

On the other hand, there were also factors across the school sector that underpinned successful change efforts. Grant Hehir's observations about a "committed", "highly dedicated" workforce had an empirical basis. A BCG survey of teaching staff in 10 schools showed that, on average, teachers in Victorian Government schools were highly committed to their work (*Exhibit D*). In fact, the survey results on average for teachers were higher than other companies in BCG's benchmark database (largely white collar workers in large private sectors companies). Interviews supported this finding: a BCG report revealed that "the average teacher in the VGS system is passionate about her or his work and feels accountable on a day-to-day basis for the impact she or he has on every student in the classroom".[19]

Blueprint for Victorian Government Schools

By the end of August, the Boston Consulting Group had delivered its final Workforce Development Strategy report to DET. The report noted wide variation in workforce development practices, with the most advanced schools exhibiting excellent practices comparable with what was observed in leading private and public sector organisations. Examples of these practices include "effective mentoring and coaching of teachers and principals; providing teachers with rich, constructive feedback on their effectiveness from a variety of sources; the use of student feedback; innovative models for peer-to-peer learning; and excellent models of leadership development."[20]

The recommendations and initiatives contained in the report were therefore designed to close the gap between schools and ensure more widespread adoption of excellent workforce development practices. The strategy outlined three phases with most emphasis and detail being placed around the first phase (the first three to five years). For this phase, there were three priorities – build leadership capacity, create and support

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[18] *Schools Workforce Development Strategy*, The Boston Consulting Group, November 2003, p16
[19] ibid.
[20] ibid, p.2

a "performance and development culture" and actively shape workforce supply – supported by 27 specific initiatives (*Exhibit E*).

The report's findings and recommendations formed an integral component of the Blueprint. And on 25 August, after conducting significant research and consultation, the four Leadership Groups established by the Minister released reports outlining their findings and recommendations. Additional information for the Blueprint came out of four Ministerial Roundtable discussions that had been held in April and May, formal consultation with key education stakeholder groups, an online survey which collected views from over 3000 students and parents, teacher feedback via a dedicated mailbox and a series of 27 teacher, principal and parent forums.[21]

On 13 November, 2003, Lynne Kosky, the Minister for Education and Training, released the Government's "Blueprint for Government Schools" at Ascot Vale Primary School. Her address described the challenges identified by the research and the consultation that had informed the Blueprint's development. She firstly pointed out that "there remains a high concentration of poor student results in some schools, in particular regions and amongst identifiable groups…These groups and regions face a challenging range of student needs, interests and talents and highlight the limitations of a 'one size fits all' model." She also highlighted the "significant and evident variations in learning outcomes between classes in the same school," pointing to the "central importance of the teaching/learning relationship." Finally, she noted the "variations in student outcomes between schools with similar students. No two schools are the same but some schools do make a greater learning difference than like schools." The Blueprint's aim in tackling these challenges was to support existing strong performance and put in place strategies to encourage improvement; essentially to identify what was working well already and where additional effort should be focused to bring about the system improvement.

The Blueprint document itself described three priority areas for reform: recognising and responding to diverse students needs, building the skills of the education workforce to enhance the teaching-learning relationship and continuously improving schools. The agenda for reform associated with these three areas was contained in seven flagship strategies and twenty-one initiatives (*Exhibit F*). A number of the flagship strategies called for self-reflection and continuous improvement on the part of teachers and principals in schools. Two of the seven flagship strategies in particular were focused on this end: Creating and Supporting a Performance and Development Culture (Strategy 4) and School Improvement (Strategy 6).

Strategy 4 called for the introduction of an accreditation scheme for performance and development culture in schools. Accreditation criteria would include multiple sources of feedback for teachers (such as feedback from parents and students on the quality of the teaching-learning relationship), customised plans to meet individual teacher development needs, quality professional development to meet those needs and induction and mentoring for beginning teachers. Accredited schools would ensure a focus on continuous improvement, enhance teacher effectiveness and therefore student outcomes; the Government stated its aim to have all schools accredited by 2008.

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[21] Department of Education and Training, *Blueprint for Government Schools*, November 2003, pp.29-31; www.det.vic.gov.au/det/resources/blueprint/default.htm

Strategy 6 would strengthen accountability arrangements across the system, whilst at the same time, tailoring the accountability processes to the needs of each school. Specific initiatives to deliver this strategy included implementation of a differential model of school review, development of systemic intervention in under-performing schools, streamlining of administrative requirements for accountability reporting and provision of parent, student and teacher opinion data to inform the school improvement process.

The reaction from key stakeholders in the Education sector was supportive but cautious. Many agreed with one principal who spoke at the launch of the Blueprint. Whilst endorsing the priorities outlined, he cautioned that the most difficult work lay ahead – in successful implementation of the strategies. Some commentators in the press were encouraging, saying that: "If Kosky can deliver these reforms, it should make a significant difference to the quality of public education in Victoria."[22] Mary Bluett, AEU Victorian Branch President, wrote that the "proposals in the Blueprint give us a chance to build a strong and vigorous public system" but added that "while the Blueprint has many worthwhile initiatives its success will ultimately depend on two things; the resources to implement it and the capacity of the Department to support schools in its implementation. The Blueprint is short on resources overall."[23]

The reaction from teachers and other principals was similarly mixed. Jan Lake, Regional Director of the Southern Metropolitan region, described her take on how teachers responded to the Blueprint launch. "There is a prevailing cynicism, particularly and this is connected with our workforce profile… It's pretty hard to dress something up in a way that is entirely new. Most people can relate somebody's brand new idea to something that has touched their lives earlier – particularly our principals and teachers who are at the older end of the spectrum and many are." She then went on to describe some of the challenges of achieving the kind of changes that were contained in the Blueprint. There could, for instance, be huge differences in what teachers might be teaching:

> "Through the Essential Learnings Framework, the profession is telling us we have to be getting much more into the concepts of rich learning, deep learning…basically taking much broader topics of human endeavour and then opening them up and having teachers contribute their particular knowledge and discipline expertise, working together – not stripping knowledge for the young person that we're working with into seven blocks or ten blocks but to have far more integrated learning experiences for students that are rich and deep and that are able to be assessed…Discipline knowledge by teachers is still very significant…[but the aim is] to make learning much more engaging and meaningful.
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> "…A book we recently read called 'The Disciplined Mind'… [tells us] that we, as an education profession, only need to be teaching three things – truth, beauty and morality. The book gives examples, such as the Holocaust, a piece of music by Mozart and Darwin's theory of evolution, and then explores how we can teach everything through these lenses. That's an extreme form but that's the direction that the Essential Learnings Framework is heading. The challenge is for teachers who did their degrees in Maths and Physics, then did their teacher training in Maths and Physics teaching methods, then came out and expected an allotment of Maths and Physics teaching…You ask them 'What

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[22] Green, S. 'We need to lift the standard of state schools', *The Age*, 28/7/2004
[23] AEU President's Report – 2004 Annual Branch Conference, 21/7/2004, www.aeuvic.asn.au/news/1090383129_20969.html

contribution can you make to a curriculum that is driven by teaching truth, beauty and morality? What can we do in terms of Physics and Maths?' It changes the way they'll think...but it's confronting because you feel deskilled…"

In addition to the cultural challenges, there were also structural challenges to achieving the changes throughout the school sector. As articulated clearly in the BCG Workforce Development Strategy report, the self-managing schools model would constrain the ability of DET to mandate certain practices across the sector. The report noted that the self-managing schools model was consistent with international trends, both within and outside schooling, to devolve accountability as far as possible to the "front line". BCG reported that the model was "increasingly accepted by local stakeholders" and had also encouraged 'outstanding innovation in some schools'[24]. However, the WDS report also pointed out that the self-managing environment can "slow the implementation of policy changes across schools".[25] The BCG report indicated what could and couldn't be achieved by a centrally driven workforce development strategy (Table 1).

Table 1: Opportunities and constraints in schools workforce development[26]

DET Can …	But Not …
Set a clear policy direction to be implemented in the VGS system …	… but not micro-manage school implementation
Support the development of a performance and development culture in all schools …	… but not mandate a specific performance and development process
Provide professional development programs in a small number of critical areas …	… but not provide all or most professional development
Codify knowledge and encourage the sharing of excellent practices …	… but not compel schools to adopt specific practices
Provide incentives to influence graduate choices …	… but not recruit into schools
Reward excellence and innovation in schools …	… but not control the innovation process
Provide mechanisms to encourage mobility…	… but not move people at will
Invest in school leadership capacity building …	… but not take difficult decisions from school leaders

Moreover, the scale of the change was daunting. It would require changes in more than 1600 separate workplaces, each of which had its own challenges and was at a different point on the change continuum. And it would seek to change the practices (and attitudes) of over 40,000 teachers, "a large number of whom have never had the opportunity to see a different world" according to Grant Hehir.

Appointment of the Deputy Secretary, School Education

On 27 November, an email was sent out to all Victorian Government school staff, announcing the appointment of Darrell Fraser to the role of Deputy Secretary, School Education. Fraser was the Principal of Glen Waverley Secondary College and, as such, had been part of the school leadership team that had brought about fundamental changes to that school. The response to Fraser's appointment was overwhelmingly positive. Out in "school land", the appointment of one of "their own" was seen as an encouraging sign; Darrell Fraser was described in the press as an "innovator" and "leading administrator"[27] who had real credibility with both teachers and principals.

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[24] *Schools Workforce Development Strategy*, The Boston Consulting Group, November 2003, p8
[25] ibid.
[26] *Schools Workforce Development Strategy*, The Boston Consulting Group, November 2003, pp.8-9
[27] Tomazin, F. 'New school of thought' *The Age*, 8/12/2003.

In the Education sector more broadly, many expressed surprise at the "very brave appointment"[28] but, at the same time, were overwhelmingly supportive. His appointment was interpreted as "a significant move by the Government, a signal that it is serious about reforming the system"[29] The President of the Victorian Association of State Secondary Principals, Andrew Blair, expressed his support for the choice and approved of the fact that "they've put in place somebody with a complete understanding of schools and school culture". Australian Principals Federation president Terry Howard was more reserved, saying that while "the proof will be in the pudding", he was pleased that DET was "finally appointing someone who knows the system and has a history in schools". AEU Victorian branch president, Mary Bluett, said: "He's very highly regarded. I think he'll find the new job challenging, but I think he's equal to it. He wouldn't be doing it if he didn't feel he would be making a real contribution to the system."[30]

Within the Department, there were varied opinions. One bureaucrat described the appointment as "a stroke of genius". Others questioned whether Fraser could confound the conventional wisdom that an ex-principal needs a minimum of two years of bureaucratic experience before they would be ready to take on a leadership role with DET.

As Fraser reflected on his new role, he was excited about the opportunities that lay ahead. At the same time, he recognised there would be personal challenges in making the transition between school leader and head of School Education. He had worked for more than a decade within a single school, leading and managing a staff of no more than 200 at any one time. The new role would bring not only the complexity of size and diversity of schools, teachers and students across the state, but a new environment in which to operate. Whilst Fraser was familiar with the language and structures used in schools, the policy environment, the political interface and the apparatus of government were all new. His initial impressions were that "the culture is about meetings, discussions are full of acronyms and full of people making assumptions that you knew about the different departments, the role of Treasury and SCAM."[31]

Moreover, Fraser was cognisant of the difficulty he faced in leading staff within the Department itself given the recent restructuring. "350 staff had just been taken out of the organisation. There were a lot of damaged individuals who felt undervalued by the system… Some of the people in the central office disappeared overnight and left everything on their desk, didn't say goodbye to their friends and colleagues who they'd worked with over four or five years." In addition, the Executive itself was in a state of flux, with some roles still to be filled.

Having held leadership roles at Glen Waverley Secondary College for 13 years, Darrell Fraser was also well aware of the pitfalls of leading change from the "centre". He described his own experience as a school principal. "The system has had a very programmatic approach to cultural change: you devise a program, throw it out to schools, give them money, then the program finishes and you start another one. You're

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[28] ibid.
[29] ibid.
[30] ibid.
[31] State Co-ordination and Management Council, comprising Departmental Secretaries and some agency heads

not actually looking to see in a detailed way what outcomes have been achieved and build on that to move it forward…[This leads to] significant disengagement of principals – they feel like they have things done to them, they feel that their voice is not heard…"

Exhibit A: Victorian schools and students

Selected parts of *Summary Statistics for Victorian schools* (March 2005)

Size of the Victorian School Education System

1. Numbers of schools, students and teachers

	Government	*Catholic*	*Independent*	*All Schools*
Number of schools by school type, February 2005				
Primary	1,222.0	379.0	57.0	1,658.0
Primary / Secondary	50.0	12.0	129.0	191.0
Secondary	251.0	83.0	19.0	353.0
Special	80.0	7.0	11.0	98.0
Language	4.0	-	-	4.0
Total	1,617.0	481.0	216.0	2,314.0
Number of students (FTE) by year level, February 2004				
Preparatory	44,268.8	13,852.0	5,569.5	63,690.3
Year 1	43,836.4	13,839.2	5,243.3	62,918.9
Year 2	44,175.4	14,114.8	5,369.0	63,659.2
Year 3	44,510.6	14,084.6	5,376.5	63,971.7
Year 4	44,921.9	14,352.2	5,743.8	65,017.9
Year 5	45,169.9	14,200.9	6,196.2	65,567.9
Year 6	45,063.8	14,418.9	6,515.2	65,997.7
Ungraded	17.4	1.0	156.7	175.1
Primary Total	311,964.0	98,863.6	40,170.2	450,997.8
Year 7	38,853.8	14,815.3	11,028.0	64,697.1
Year 8	39,623.6	14,922.6	11,156.8	65,703.0
Year 9	37,582.8	14,088.3	10,597.6	62,268.7
Year 10	37,478.4	13,754.1	10,949.2	62,181.7
Year 11	35,938.6	12,541.3	11,236.4	59,716.3
Year 12	30,722.3	11,392.9	10,689.0	52,804.2
Ungraded	72.2	-	2.0	74.2
Secondary Total	220,271.7	81,514.5	65,659.0	367,445.2
Special	6,826.2	165.8	331.0	7,323.0
Language	1,010.0	-	-	1,010.0
Total	540,071.9	180,543.9	106,160.2	826,776.0

Source: DE&T February School Census 2004. Figures on student FTE include all changes from the 2004 school audit process

Number of teaching staff (FTE) in schools on pay by school type, as at end of quarter					
	December 2003	*March 2004*	*June 2004*	*September 2004*	*December 2004*
Primary	18,694.7	18,656.8	18,655.5	18,622.7	18,657.1
Secondary	16,690.7	16,811.3	16,841.7	16,804.6	16,721.4
Special(P-12)Lang/Other	3,336.4	3,380.7	3,414.3	3,406.8	3,437.0
Total	38,721.8	38,848.8	38,911.5	38,834.1	38,815.5

Source: DE&T Quality Workforce Summary

2. Historical Trend in numbers of Government schools & students, February

Year	# of Schools	Number of Students (FTE)				
		Primary	Secondary	Special	Language	Total
1999	1,635.0	306,218.0	216,367.4	5,413.6	1,073.0	529,072.0
2000	1,631.0	309,539.9	215,921.3	5,671.7	802.0	531,934.9
2001	1,625.0	311,007.9	217,557.1	5,944.3	902.9	535,412.2
2002	1,625.0	312,689.2	216,858.8	6,170.5	844.0	536,562.5
2003	1,615.0	312,134.4	218,740.7	6,517.0	917.0	538,309.1
2004	1,618.0	311,964.0	220,271.7	6,826.2	1,010.0	540,071.9

Source: DE&T February School Census

3. Number (FTE) of students by gender in Government schools, February

Year	Male	Female	Percent of male students			All Students
			Primary	Yr 7-10	Yr 11-12	
1999	271,859.0	257,213.0	51.7	51.7	47.6	51.4
2000	272,954.1	268,980.8	51.7	51.8	47.3	51.3
2001	275,221.8	260,190.4	51.6	51.9	47.9	51.4
2002	276,175.1	260,387.4	51.7	51.9	48.2	51.5
2003	277,491.6	260,817.5	51.7	51.8	48.7	51.5
2004	278,370.3	261,701.6	51.7	52.0	48.4	51.5

Source: DE&T February school census. Not that Yr 7-10 includes secondary ungraded students

4. Number (FTE) of students with disabilities in Government schools, August

Year	In Regular Schools	In Special Schools	Total	% of total student cohort
1999	8,262	5,506	13,768	2.62
2001	10,953	6,036	16,959	3.17
2002	11,908	6,345	18,353	3.43
2003	12,351	6,458	18,809	3.49
2004	13,964	7,180	21,144	3.93

Source: DE&T August school census and DE&T Records

5. Number (FTE) of Aboriginal students in Government schools and percent of student cohort, August

Year	Primary		Yr 7-10		Yr 11-12		Special		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
1999	3,376.4	1.1	1,387.1	0.9	277.8	0.5	70.9	1.3	5,112.2	1.0
2001	3,800.8	1.2	1,522.1	1.0	336.3	0.5	91.7	1.5	5,750.9	1.1
2002	3,937.0	1.3	1,573.6	1.0	326.9	0.5	117.6	1.9	5,955.1	1.1
2003	4,019.3	1.3	1,651.4	1.1	348.0	0.5	125.9	1.9	6,144.6	1.1
2004	4,263.3	1.4	1,836.1	1.2	387.7	0.5	138.5	2.0	6,625.6	1.2

Source: DE&T August School Census. Note that Yr 7-10 includes secondary ungraded students

6. Number of students - Language backgrounds other than English, August

Year	Speak mainly English at Home			Most Common non-English languages spoken at home
	Yes	No	Total	
1999	63,205	68,981	132,186	Vietnamese, Turkish, Arabic, Cantonese
2001	64,118	69,398	133,514	Vietnamese, Arabic, Turkish, Cantonese
2002	64,287	69,988	134,275	Vietnamese, Arabic, Cantonese, Turkish
2003	64,129	71,337	135,456	Vietnamese, Arabic, Cantonese, Turkish
2004	63,090	72,733	135,823	Vietnamese, Arabic, Cantonese, Turkish

Source: DE&T August school census

7. Provision of languages other than English

Year	Primary LOTE		Secondary LOTE		Languages with highest
	Students	%	Students	%	Enrolments in VCE Unit 4
1999	272696	88.7	115,015	54.2	French, German, Japanese, Indonesian
2001	274329	87.1	113,009	51.6	Indonesian, Japanese, German, French
2002	269996	88.0	108,048	50.5	Japanese, Indonesian, French, German
2003	267827	85.5	115,109	53.3	Chinese, French, Japanese German

Source: DE&T August LOTE Surveys. 2003 is the most recent available data

Source: DET website
(http://www.det.vic.gov.au/det/about/research/researchpublications.htm)

Exhibit B: Old and New DET structures (1): Original DET structure

Minister for Education and Training

Minister for Education Services

Victorian Curriculum & Assessment Authority
Chairperson: Kwong Lee Dow
CEO: Michael White

Victorian Schools Innovation Commission
Chairperson: Barry Jones

Victorian Qualifications Authority
Chairperson: Helen Praetz
Director: Dennis Gunning

Adult, Community & Further Education Board
Chairperson: Lynne Wannan

Victorian Learning & Employment Skills Commission
Chairperson: Peter Laver

Secretary
Grant Hehir

Registered Schools Board
Chairperson: Leley Fowler (Acting)

Merit Protection Board
Senior Chairperson: Ian Adama

Victorian Institute of Teaching
Chairperson: Susan Halliday

Office of School Education
Director: Kim Bannikoff

Office of Planning Strategy & Resources
Director: Jeff Rosewarne

Office of Portfolio Integration
Director: Jenny Samms

Office of Training & Tertiary Education
Director: Jim Davidson

Deputy Director Policy & Planning
Michael Kane

Assistant Director Resources Management
Ethel McAlpine

Regional Directors & Regions

General Manager Human Resources
Tony Bugden

Assistant Director Student Outcomes
Marlo Abela

General Manager Strategic Relations
Lesley Foster

Assistant Director Student Programs
Sue Christophers

Project Director School Projects
Howard Kelly

Chief Finance Officer Financial Services
John Hall

General Manager Information Technology
Ian Paton

General Manager Shared Services
Gail Hart

General Manager Strategic Initiatives
Ian Burrage

General Manager International
Ian Hind

General Manager External & Inter Governmental Relations
Colin Twisse

General Manager Evaluation & Audit
David Brooks

General Manager Strategic Policy & Resources
John Sullivan

Director Special Projects
Dawn Davis

General Manager Quality Assurance & Review
Lynn Glover

General Manager Design & Developments
Jan Trewhella

General Manager Policy & Resources
Philip Clarke

General Manager Adult, Community & Further Education
Susan McDonald (Acting)

General Manager Vocational Education & Training
Patricia Neden

Director Higher Education
Terry Stokes

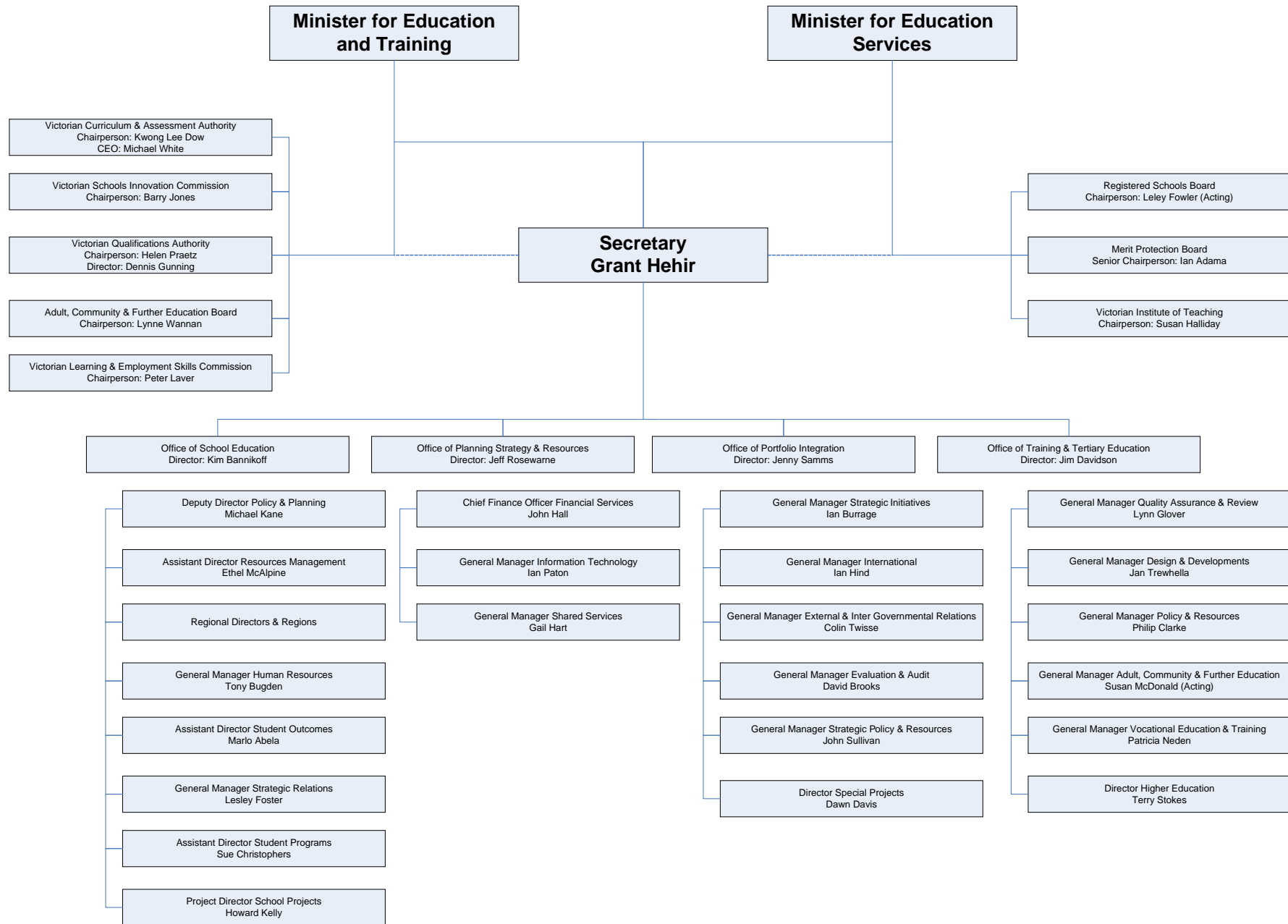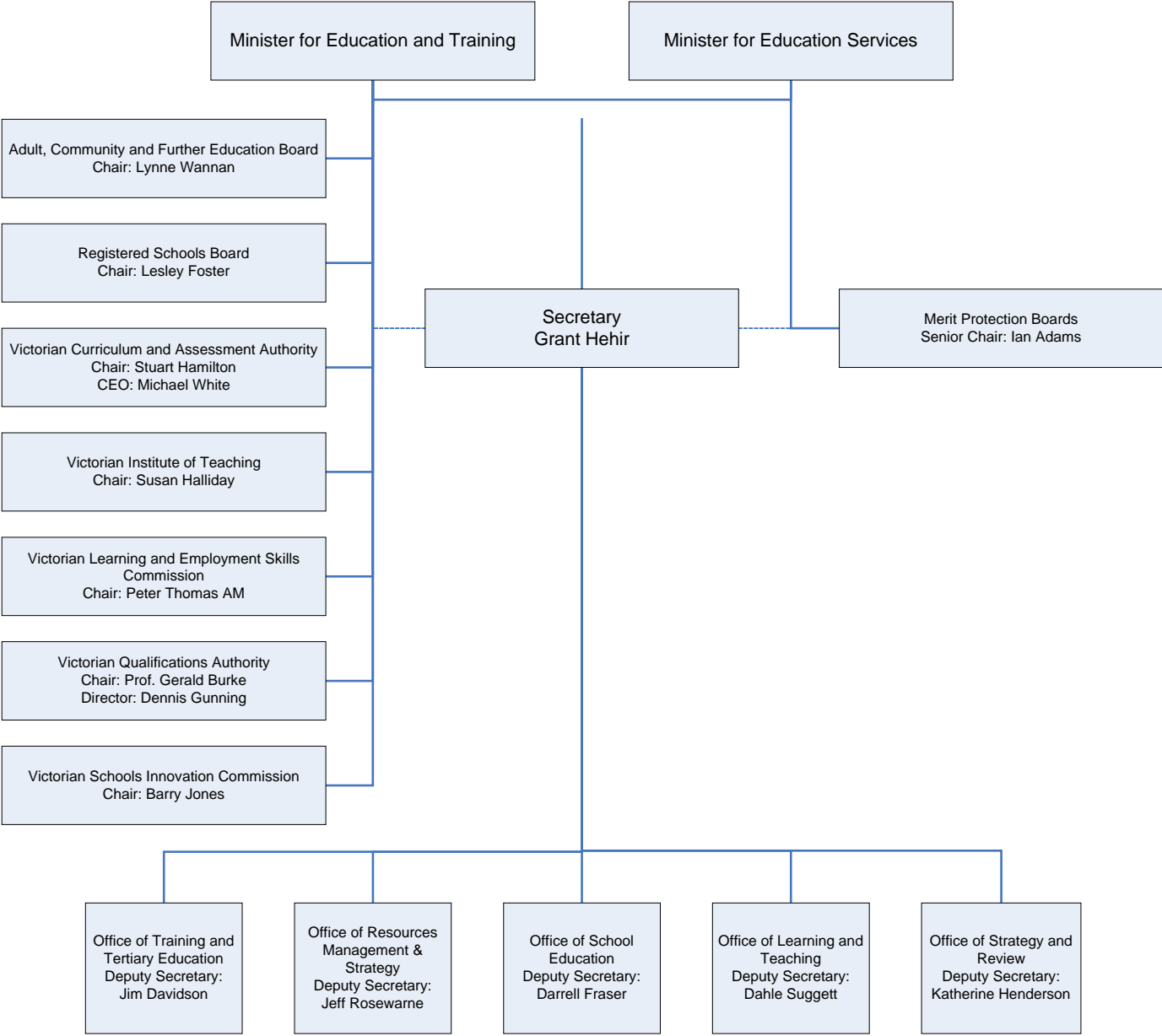**Exhibit B (cont): Old and New DET structures (2): New structure for Department of Education and Training**

Source: DET website (http://www.det.vic.gov.au/det/about/structur.htm)

Exhibit C: Examples of transformation in Victorian Government schools

'Authentic' curriculum
Essendon North Primary School has introduced innovative teaching methods in several areas. In this school, parent-teacher evenings are structured as 'portfolio presentations', where students, with guidance from their teachers, explain how their learning has developed over time. Among these and other innovations, Essendon North runs a series of 'learning to learn' activities in the first term of every year, to enable students to determine their learning styles, preferences and objectives.

School-community relationships
Broadmeadows Primary School provides independent IT support services that meet both school and community needs. IT is integrated into the school's open learning environment and IT staff are active members of learning teams. Evening classes for parents on computer literacy build links with the community and help fund the school's IT support, while past students operate a small, web-based design business, using the school's facilities after hours. And IT is not the only area in which Broadmeadows Primary is building community relationships. Its in-house school kinder program and alliances with local childcare centres provide an integrated 'family care' focus; and the principal's informal mentor relationship with business professionals helps drive innovation in the school.

Flexible workforce, role specialisation and teaming
Port Phillip Specialist School employs a broad range of professionals who work in flexible, integrated teams in a group-learning environment. These professionals include teachers, social workers, a psychologist, speech pathologists, an occupational therapist, a music therapist, a physiotherapist, IT specialists and academics. The teams, which design integrated activities for each child's learning plan, also meet regularly at formal and informal forums to discuss students' progress, and meet weekly to discuss all aspects of student, staff and family welfare.
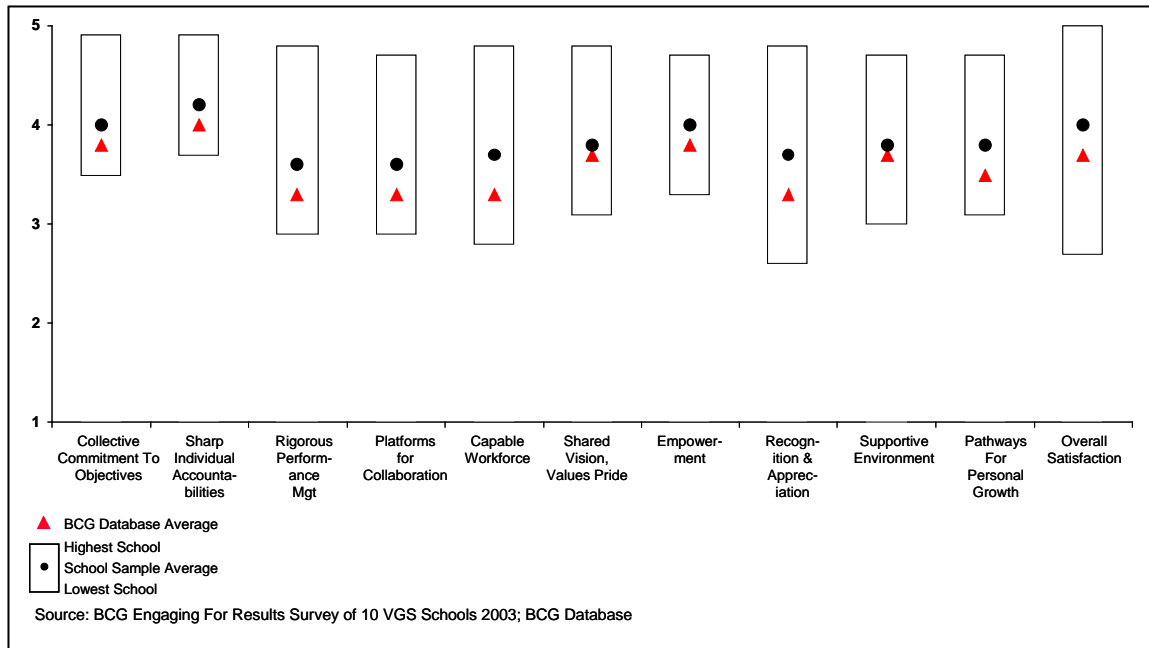
Performance and outcome focus
Box Hill Senior Secondary School uses innovative techniques to understand school performance and student outcomes. For example, the school is one of several that uses data that compare VCE performance with student potential as shown by GAT results. It also conducts an exit survey for all students 12 months after they leave the school and, for 20% of students, 3 years after leaving. Box Hill Secondary uses the Internet to provide real-time information for students and parents on students' progress and attendance (updated every 5 weeks), and maintains web-based student records, including aspirations, values, learning styles and extra-curricular activities. Other innovative performance and outcomes measures include monthly self-assessments by students and a tiered monitoring program designed to provide intensive assistance to those students at greatest risk.
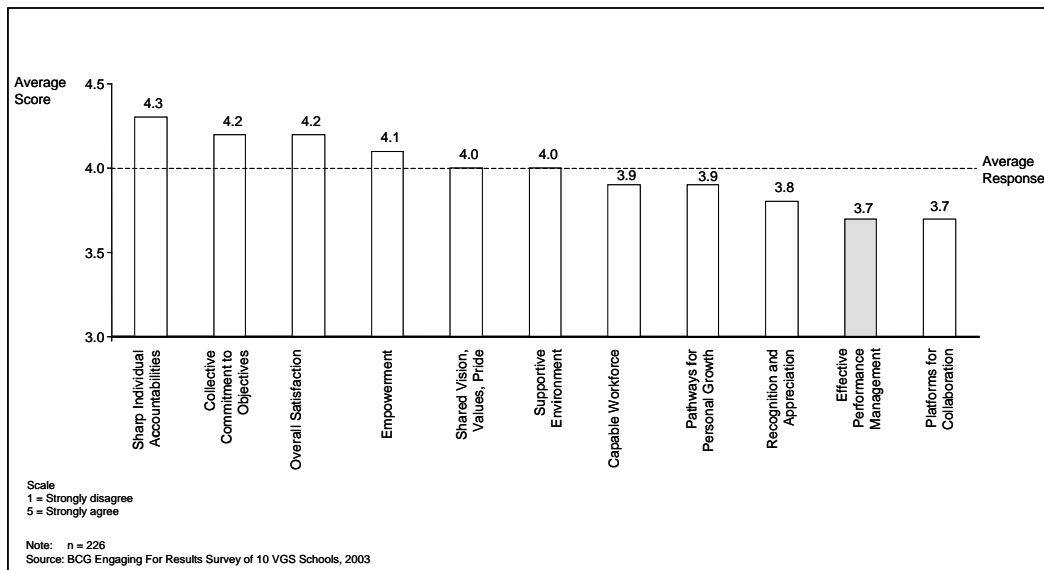
Source: Schools Workforce Development Strategy, The Boston Consulting Group, November 2003, p. 12

Exhibit D: Selected Results from BCG's Workforce Engagement Survey 2003

Workforce engagement survey results: Victorian Government schools versus BCG database

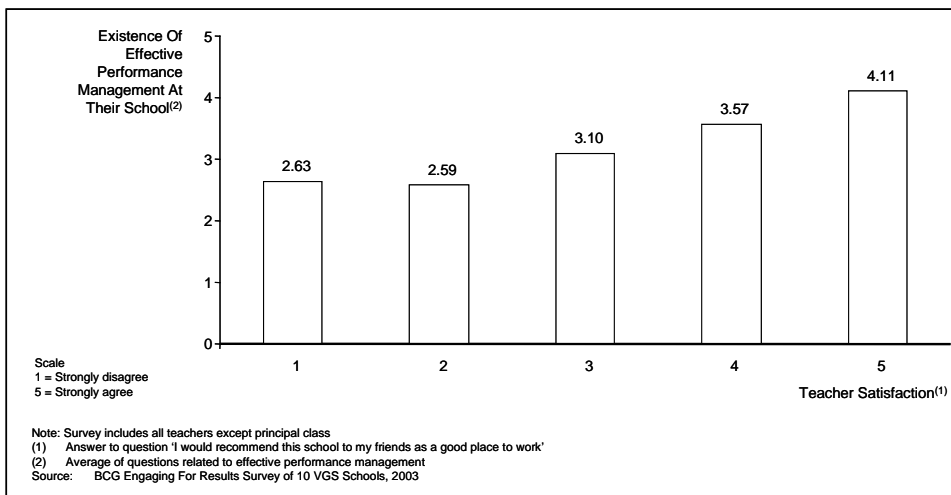Source: BCG Engaging For Results Survey of 10 VGS Schools 2003; BCG Database

'Engaging for Results' questionnaire category results

Scale
1 = Strongly disagree
5 = Strongly agree

Note: n = 226
Source: BCG Engaging For Results Survey of 10 VGS Schools, 2003

Survey responses for 'effective performance management'

Average Score

School	Score
School 1	4.8
School 2	4.2
School 3	4.2
School 4	3.9
School 5	3.9
School 6	3.6
School 7	3.5
School 8	3.5
School 9	3.0
School 10	2.9

Average Response

Scale
1 = Strongly disagree
5 = Strongly agree

Note: n = 226
Source: BCG Engaging For Results Survey of 10 VGS Schools, 2003
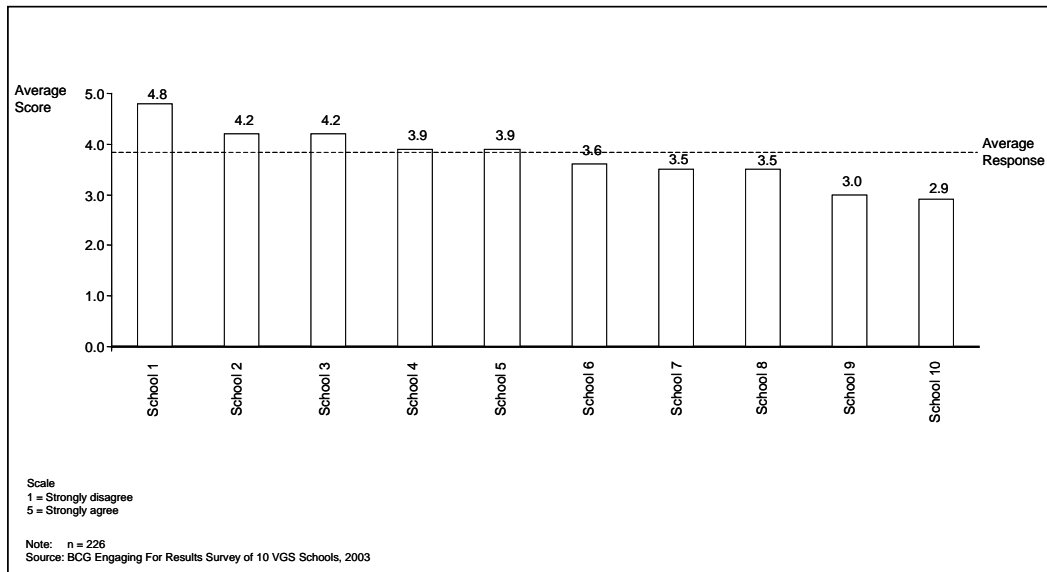
Relationship between effective performance management and school recommendation ratings

Existence Of Effective Performance Management At Their School[2]

Teacher Satisfaction	Value
1	2.63
2	2.59
3	3.10
4	3.57
5	4.11

Teacher Satisfaction[1]

Scale
1 = Strongly disagree
5 = Strongly agree

Note: Survey includes all teachers except principal class
(1)   Answer to question 'I would recommend this school to my friends as a good place to work'
(2)   Average of questions related to effective performance management
Source: BCG Engaging For Results Survey of 10 VGS Schools, 2003

Source: Schools Workforce Development Strategy, The Boston Consulting Group, November 2003.

Exhibit E: Initiatives to Support BCG's Workforce Development Strategy

Leadership Capacity Building	
Key Recommendations	*Initiatives*
Build leadership capabilities through performance and development	1.1 Improve strategic investment in leadership development: a) Enhance the strategic management of leadership development at the centre b) Build an accredited framework for the provision of leadership development (linked to defined capabilities) c) Actively participate in shaping the development of a national body to provide certified school leadership training d) Establish peer and community mentor and coach relationships for principals 1.2 Introduce a balanced scorecard approach to leadership performance management
Manage the supply of quality leaders	1.3 Introduce an accelerated development program for high potential leaders 1.4 Introduce flexibility to and increase upper levels of leadership remuneration to better reflect role complexity 1.5 Professionalise the principal recruitment and selection process
Reduce leadership workload demands	1.6 Simplify and coordinate interactions with schools to reduce workload demands 1.7 Introduce 'service centres' for networks of small schools to address administration scale inefficiencies

Creating a Performance and Development Culture	
Key Recommendations	***Initiatives***

Support the development and transfer of excellent performance and development practices	2.1 Develop accreditation scheme for 'performance and development culture schools'
	
	2.2 Support the transfer of innovative performance and development practices
	
	   a) Performance and development 'knowledge centre'
	
	   b) Innovation funding for new performance and development approaches
	
	   c) Recognition program for excellent practices

Provide selective strategic intervention in teacher professional development	2.3 Focus DET intervention in professional development on a small number of key priorities each year 2.4 Support broad adoption of induction mentoring for beginning teachers across Victorian Government schools
Enhance school leadership capabilities in managing performance and development	2.5 Introduce performance and development criteria into leadership performance management 2.6 Introduce performance and development elements into leadership professional development

Active Shaping of Supply	
Key Recommendations	**Initiatives**

Ensure appropriate teacher supply composition	3.1 Enhance demand and supply monitoring and projection capabilities
	
	   a) Extend current workforce planning analysis (including consideration of technology systems change)
	
	   b) Focus reporting on key workforce planning strategic issues
	
	   c) Support improvement of school-based workforce planning
	
	3.2 Engage in high-level advocacy with teacher training providers to support delivery of DEandT's teacher requirements
	
	   a) Senior-level engagement with university faculties on key issues such as subject mix
	
	   b) Senior-level engagement with university faculties to provide feedback on course quality
	
	3.3 Support targeted teacher retraining for qualified teachers to gain an additional specialisation in an approved area of need

Ensure appropriate distribution of teacher supply	3.4 Review and increase incentives for teacher employment in schools experiencing recruiting difficulties
	
	3.5 Encourage effective practicum placements across all Victorian Government schools
	
	   a) Provide financial support for student teachers to undertake practicums in rural or outer suburban growth areas
	
	   b) Establish DEandT requirements and expectations for Government schools and teachers around participation in and provision of effective practicum placement opportunities
	
	3.6 Provide direct recruiting assistance and develop enhancements to enable recruiting flexibility and overcome recruiting difficulties

Enhance efficiency of recruiting process	3.7 Review and revise current recruiting processes and requirements to reduce time and cost involved in school-level recruitment (eg regulations, procedures, data support)

Source: Schools Workforce Development Strategy, The Boston Consulting Group, November 2003, p57-59

Exhibit F: Summary of Blueprint for Victorian Government Schools

Priority Areas for Reform	Flagship Strategies	Initiatives
Recognising and Responding to Diverse Student Needs	Strategy 1: Student Learning	Identify and development a broad framework of 'essential learnings' for all Victorian students
		Develop new curriculum and reporting guidelines
		Development of defined assessment measures of student progress
		Development of principles of learning and teaching from Prep to Year 12
		Develop a knowledge bank to ensure best practice is shared across the system
	Strategy 2: Developing a New Resource Allocation Model	Develop a new resource allocation model that is flexible, equitable, efficient and student focussed
Building the Skills of the Education Workforce to Enhance the Teaching-Learning Relationship	Strategy 3: Building Leadership Capacity	Develop an improved principal selection process
		Establish a mentoring program for first-time principals
		Establish a coaching support program for experienced principals
		Introduce a 'balanced scorecard' approach to improve the performance management of principals
		Implement an accelerated development program for high potential leaders
		Implement a development program for high performing principals
		Expand local administrative bureaus for networks of small schools
	Strategy 4: Creating and Supporting a Performance and Development Culture	Introduce an accreditation scheme for performance and development culture schools
	Strategy 5: Teacher Professional Development	Invest $5m each year to enable 460 teachers to undertake focused teacher professional leave
		Expand the induction program for beginning teachers and continue mentoring programs
Continuously Improving Schools	Strategy 6: School Improvement	Implement a differential model of school review
		Develop clear performance triggers to drive systemic intervention in under-performing schools
		Implement a single planning and accountability document
		Provide parent, teacher and student opinion data to all schools
	Strategy 7: Leading Schools Fund	Establish the Leading Schools Fund in order to drive whole school improvement

Source: DET, Blueprint for Government Schools, November 2003