



Leadership for the West

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### VCE RESULTS NOT THE WHOLE STORY

While students in Melbourne's West are the most disadvantaged in terms of the socio-economic status of their families, compared to students across the State, they are second highest in terms of the number of students who completed year 12 who proceeded on to further education, training or full-employment<sup>1</sup>. This observation is made in light of recent media articles that have drawn attention to the poor VCE results achieved by students in government schools in Melbourne's West.

Anton Mayer, CEO of LeadWest, said that the connection between educational attainment and improved life chances is well established and every effort must be made to improve educational outcomes for students attending public schools in Melbourne's West. However, effective action must be based on a comprehensive understanding and analysis of the underlying causes.

LeadWest has identified 'education and skills' as a priority agenda item for 2009 and will be running, in partnership with Victoria University, an Education and Skills Forum later in the year.

"We need to delve deeper into what the VCE results are telling us. There are a number of factors that impact a student's performance including the socio economic status of the family, gender distribution of students, language background other than English, educational level of parents and the individual's aspirations. These factors have a disproportionately negative impact on students attending government schools in Melbourne's West compared to students attending government secondary schools in other areas. This means that public schools require extra resources to overcome some of these barriers to higher educational attainment," Mr Mayer said.

Not all western region students aspire to a university education. There are those undertaking VCE with a view to pursuing a trade or technical pathway or to enter full-time employment. For these pathways a 'pass' in VCE is the main aim, not a high score. Similarly, there are students completing alternatives to VCE, such as Vocational Education and Training Programs or the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning. If this is their chosen pathway, our secondary schools should and do provide them with the opportunities to realise their aspirations.

"The percentage of students from government secondary schools proceeding to higher education, which includes technical and further training and not just university entrance, in Melbourne's West do particularly well compared to other regions in Victoria.

"A quality education and well-developed skills is a passport to a better future for young people of the West, it is also an imperative for a strong western region economy. LeadWest will continue to advocate for a better understanding of the barriers to educational attainment, and for this to be taken into consideration by Government in distributing funding and resources to government schools in Melbourne's West," Mr Mayer said.

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<sup>1</sup> Australian Council for Educational Research 'On Track Survey 2008' data.