

# Annual Report

---

to 30 June 1998

---

- *This report covers the activities of the Victorian Tertiary Admissions Centre to 30 June 1998. Other publications of the Centre are: VTAC Guide – a Guide to University and TAFE Courses; VICTER – Victorian Tertiary Entrance Requirements; ENTER into Tertiary Courses; Back to the Books*

The mission of the Victorian Tertiary Admissions Centre is:

To provide for its members, institutes of TAFE and participating institutions a range of quality tertiary admission and related services at an international best practice standard.

To provide its clients, applicants for the tertiary courses offered by these institutions, with efficient, simple and equitable admission procedures together with accurate and accessible information about those courses.

## ● Objectives and strategies

---

For members, institutes of TAFE and participating institutions

**Objective 1** — to devise selection policies for the joint selection system without derogation from the rights of each member, institute of TAFE or participating institution to determine for itself the principles for the selection of new students or the prescription of prerequisites for courses.

**Objective 2** — to establish and administer comparable admission procedures for members, institutes of TAFE and participating institutions by providing a rational, centralised, equitable, efficient and effective framework and related processes for the admission of new students.

**Objective 3** — to provide a forum for the exchange of ideas and information about developments in the administration of tertiary admissions to meet the changing needs and circumstances of its members, institutes of TAFE and participating institutions.

**Objective 4** — to enhance services to members, institutes of TAFE and participating institutions by exploring opportunities in areas that complement VTAC's functions.

**Objective 5** — to carry out such other functions as the Management Committee and Board of Trustees deem desirable to further the objectives of VTAC and the common interests of members and institutes of TAFE.

**Strategy 1** — Collaborate with and advise its members, institutes of TAFE and participating institutions in revising selection policies and procedures as may be required.

**Strategy 2** — Administer special tertiary admissions tests for the purpose of assisting in the selection of certain applicants.

**Strategy 3** — Assist its members, institutes of TAFE and participating institutions in administering their procedures for the admission of new students by providing:

- training and support for selection personnel
- statistics and data files on admissions and for research purposes.

**Strategy 4** — Develop computer systems and associated procedures and implement new technologies which support the admissions process.

## ● Objectives and strategies

---

### For applicants

**Objective 1** — To enhance and facilitate interest in tertiary education in Victoria by providing efficient, simple and equitable procedures to apply for places in courses together with accurate and accessible information about those courses.

Based on a preference system that facilitates multiple choice, the procedures provide an option for change of preference and place applicants in the course of highest preference for which they can be accepted.

**Strategy 1** — Provide all prospective applicants with details of courses available in member and participating institutions and institutes of TAFE, and of the requirements and procedures for selection into these courses.

**Strategy 2** — Disseminate impartial information about:

- tertiary education in Victoria to schools and school communities and other groups of potential tertiary students
- the TER and scaling process
- the existence of VTAC and the application process generally.

**Strategy 3** — Co-operate with other bodies committed to the same objectives as VTAC.

## Operational Review

The review covered all areas of VTAC's operations, governance and a separate risk management assessment. Applicants, institutions and schools were consulted, with focus groups being conducted with each client category.

The external review reinforced and provided a focus for change, and while it was generally positive it highlighted certain shortcomings. For example: some lack of customer orientation, the need for a greater emphasis on skills sharing and training, under resourcing in the information technology area owing to a loss of staff through inability to offer competitive salaries, and some under development of adequate risk management and computing security practices.

The Management Committee responded fully and immediately to these findings.

- It endorsed an internal restructuring, both in general and in the computing section, that involved a reorganization providing clear accountability for service delivery, service improvement and performance planning and, in the case of the computing team, divergence between system development and production, so that there is acceptance testing and quality control involving personnel different to the developer, duplication of knowledge through the appointment of a deputy computing manager and augmentation of salary levels to retain existing staff.
- It accepted an extensive array of information technology risk management and security recommendations and timelines covering IT strategy, security monitoring, physical security, database integrity, disaster recovery, alternative site processing, offsite backup arrangements, Internet security and segregation of duties.

## Y2K

The Y2K issue has been the focus of several reports, investigations and questionnaires from relevant authorities. It also formed part of the above review.

During 1997/98 the following action occurred.

- Institutions were apprised of which files and formats had to be amended in terms of 2001 selection.
- An internal list of hardware and software compliance was drawn up, based on testing and warranty data. The next stage beginning in the second half of 1998, will be devoted to fully testing warranty claims.

## Computing

In the latter half of 1997 the first stage of the reconstructed imaging system was handed over by the external developers. This consisted of the new Oracle database, the imaging/scanning/printing routines and associated interfaces. The next stage to be commenced later in 1998 and projected to be completed in 1999, will involve transferring application processing routines to the new database.

The other major development during the year was the creation of the web application process. Two streams were created, one for Year 12 applicants paralleling the existing IVRS routine which will populate the personal data screen from the Year 12 enrolment file, the second for non-Year 12 applicants duplicating the current paper application.

The routines were written in pure Java in order to allow applicants to move forward and backward without loss of data. Considerable time was expended on solving technical problems associated with the creation of links to the various databases. For security and infrastructure reasons the server was located externally to VTAC.

## Information Provision

Apart from providing another alternative method of applying with long term viability, the impetus for the development of the above process also came from the decision to actively encourage applicants to access VTAC data and applications electronically. In turn, this arose from the twin needs of looking towards the future and the steadily increasing size of the *Guide* with consequent concerns about accessibility of information, particularly on the part of those applicants returning to study.

It was decided to distribute the *Guide* through newsagents, initially at cost (\$2.50), the 2000 edition at \$5.00 and increasing thereafter such that use of the website, apart from convenience and ease of sorting and rearranging information, becomes economically preferable.

For equity reasons and with the full and total cooperation of institutions, Internet access points were established at most metropolitan and country campuses. Intending applicants can, at these points, access VTAC information free of charge and receive assistance, if necessary, with the web application from institutional staff who have been trained in all facets of the process.

## Career Easy

Approximately two-thirds of schools purchased, on a cost recovery basis, *Career Easy*. An extensive survey of users was conducted in February. Although the results were most positive, a number of enhancements/improvements were suggested. Those were incorporated into the updated version of the software, to be released in August 1998.

Electronic transfer of VTAC data to schools was instituted for the 1997/98 cycle, not without some problems and delays. This process will be streamlined for the next cycle.

## Test Usage

Number of Candidates Registered and not deleted		2059
comprising:		
	for MC only	1870
	for WE only	19
	for both MC and WE	170
Number of tests booked after deletion		2229
Number of tests sat		1955
Number of tests not sat (absentees)		274
Number of candidates withdrawing paid registration		37
Number of special sittings arranged	Registrations	Tests
Northern Territory	2	2
Tasmania	7	7
Victoria (rural)	4	4
VTAC	82	84
incomplete	(5)	(5)
Total - completed	95	97

TEST SERIES	1996			1997		
	Tests	Absent	Sat	Tests	Absent	Sat
<b>STAT Multiple Choice</b>	2162	1832	330	2040	1812	228
<b>STAT Written English</b>	248	175	73	189	143	46
<b>TOTAL</b>	2410	2007	403 (16.7%)	2229	1955	274 (12.2%)

In 1997 two STAT test series only were used by Tertiary Admissions Centres across Australia. The two test series were as follows:

- STAT Multiple Choice (MC) 50% verbal, 50% quantitative
- STAT Written English (WE) Written English (essay)
- STAT Multiple Choice was the most widely used test series.

Since VTAC was willing (and able) to organise special sittings, a large number of Tasmanian applicants to any Australian Tertiary Institutions, registered to do their STAT test through VTAC.

## Testing

General testing sessions were held at two metropolitan venues (La Trobe University, Bundoora and Monash University, Clayton), and at La Trobe University, Bendigo, on 8 November and 22 November. Applicants to courses involved in the early offer round were instructed to register for the first testing session on 9 November to ensure timely availability of results to selection authorities for these courses. Testing sessions were held at La Trobe University, Albury-Wodonga and Sunraysia Institute of TAFE, Mildura on 8 November to accommodate the demand from rural areas for local testing venues.

The following numbers are the number of actual sittings at each of the venues in 1997:

---

La Trobe University, Bundoora	8 November	254 (AM)	204 (PM)
	22 November	95 (AM)	84 (PM)
Monash University, Clayton	8 November	383 (AM)	339 (PM)
	22 November	172 (AM)	151 (PM)
La Trobe University, Bendigo	8 November	42 (AM)	49 (PM)
	22 November	13 (AM)	17 (PM)
La Trobe University, Albury-Wodonga	8 November	27 (AM)	18 (PM)
Sunraysia TAFE, Mildura	8 November	9 (AM)	6 (PM)

---

Special arrangements were made for candidates unable to attend any of the general testing sessions. In addition to tests held interstate, tests were conducted at VTAC for candidates who were ill, or unable to attend on a Saturday for religious reasons.

Reciprocal arrangements continued between the other states' Admission Centres and VTAC, enabling candidates in any state to sit tests for an interstate application.

Interstate institutions that require early sittings of STAT should ensure that VTAC is aware of their requirements as soon as possible. With Sydney Dentistry requiring all applicants to sit a STAT prior to October 15 1997, and VTAC being informed only after the publication of the VTAC Guide, increased considerably the workload of the STAT coordinator.

The organization, in advance, of session time(s) and venue(s) in Tasmania would be helpful, both to Tasmanian Registrants and to the STAT coordinator.

## General Comments

### ACER

The service provided by ACER in 1997 was extremely helpful. Marking of tests remained prompt and ACER arranging the special sittings overseas and for candidates who wished to register after the final VTAC closing date of 31 October reduced the workload of the STAT coordinator.

### REGISTRATION

The inclusion of the STAT Registration within the VTAC Application Form once again resulted in a number of candidates completing the registration section simply because it was there.

The payment situation once again caused considerable additional work, even though STAT Registration was only completed on payment of all outstanding fees. The two main areas of concern were those candidates who had indicated that they wished to sit the STAT and who did not pay their fees, and those who paid a STAT Registration fee without indicating that they wished to sit the STAT. With the delay in Progressive Acknowledgement letters, candidates often became aware of the problem only after the sitting date. Given that they often had bad memories and were unaware of the testing sessions they had recorded, there was considerable work in amending the database to reflect the true registration details.

There is no simple way of comparing the two databases involved, the main database and the STAT database. This resulted in a considerable amount of manual checking and file modifications.

## Summary

The testing program ran smoothly in 1997 despite a few areas of concern, the main one being payment as in 1996.

### 1998/99 Tests

ACER will continue to produce STAT tests that can be used by Admission Centres only, and with the minimising of varieties of the possible series, candidates applying to a number of states will have the same STAT tests to sit. The STAT tests that will be used in the 1998/99 testing period are:

STAT Multiple Choice: 50% verbal, 50% quantitative (2 Hour, 70 question paper)

STAT Written English: Written English [essay] (1 hour, written essay)

## Recommendations

- that STAT Multiple choice and STAT Written English be used for the 1998/99 testing cycle
- taking into account the distribution of the Sample Collection of Questions to each registrant, the fee schedule for 1998/9 be:

One Test	\$65.00
Two Tests	\$85.00
Sample Collection of Questions prior to Registration	\$5.00
Changes to registration details (e.g. venue, date)	\$20.00
VTAC Special arrangements to sit within Australia	\$30.00
Special arrangements to sit overseas	to be arranged with, and paid directly to, ACER
Duplicate Results letter	\$10.00

## Audit scope

The accompanying financial statements of the Victorian Tertiary Admissions Centre for the year ended 30 June 1998, comprising a balance sheet, revenue and expense statement, statement of cash flows and notes to the financial statements have been audited. The members of the Centre are responsible for the preparation and presentation of the financial statements and the information they contain. An independent audit of the financial statements has been carried out in order to express an opinion on them as required by the *Audit Act* 1994.

The audit has been conducted in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards to provide reasonable assurance as to whether the financial statements are free of material misstatement. The audit procedures included an examination, on a test basis, of evidence of accounting policies and significant accounting estimates. These procedures have been undertaken to form an opinion as to whether, in all material respects, the financial statements are presented fairly in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards and other mandatory professional reporting requirements, so as to present a view which is consistent with my understanding of the financial position of the Victorian Tertiary Admissions Centre and the results of its operations and its cash flows.

The audit does not provide any assurances that the Centre's systems, or any other systems that the Centre relies on in the conduct of its activities such as those of suppliers and service providers are year 2000 compliant, or whether plans and associated actions are adequate to address the year 2000 issue. The year 2000 issue has been addressed only in the context of existing audit responsibilities under Australian Auditing Standards to express an opinion on the financial statements.

The audit opinion expressed on the financial statements has been formed on the above basis.

## Audit opinion

In my opinion, the financial statements present fairly the financial position of the Victorian Tertiary Admissions Centre as at 30 June 1998 and the results of its operation and its cash flows for the year ended on that date in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards and other mandatory professional reporting requirements.

  
C.A. BARAGWANATH  
Auditor-General

# Victorian Tertiary Admissions Centre – Balance Sheet as at 30 June 1998

	<b>1998</b>	<b>1997</b>
	<b>\$</b>	<b>\$</b>
Equity		
Retained earnings	641328	842308
<b>Total Equity</b>	<b>641328</b>	<b>842308</b>
Current Liabilities		
Sundry Creditors & Accruals	243513	253338
Audit Fee	7000	6000
Prov. For Recreation Leave	92154	66021
Receipts in Advance	19690	35547
<b>Total Current Liabilities</b>	<b>362357</b>	<b>360906</b>
Non-Current Liabilities		
Prov. for Long Service Leave	114778	87917
<b>Total Non-Current Liabilities</b>	<b>114778</b>	<b>87917</b>
<b>Total Equity and Liabilities</b>	<b>1118463</b>	<b>1291131</b>
Current Assets		
Cash at Bank & on hand	22031	8927
Sundry Debtors & Accruals	43117	45115
Investments	248949	483346
Payments in Advance	55004	35341
<b>Total Current Assets</b>	<b>369101</b>	<b>572729</b>
Non-Current Assets		
Furniture & Equipment	210716	284100
Motor Vehicles	65094	64705
Leasehold Improvements	44001	42664
Imaging System Equipment	107265	107296
System Software Development & Installation Costs	322286	219637
<b>Total Non-Current Assets</b>	<b>749362</b>	<b>718402</b>
<b>Total Assets:</b>	<b>1118463</b>	<b>1291131</b>

# Victorian Tertiary Admissions Centre – Revenue and Expense Statement for the year ended 30 June 1998

	<b>1998</b>	<b>1997</b>
	\$	\$
<b>Operating Revenue:</b>		
Contributions	1512181	1535473
Processing Fee	1031150	1050088
Bank Income	30421	38791
Book Bounty & Copyright	3962	10852
Sale of Fixed Assets	34818	37755
IVR Telstra	497046	389593
Career Easy Income	24000	58250
TIS Membership & Service Fees	6789	3120
Joining Fees	22500	5000
Sundries	887	1696
<b>Total Operating Revenue</b>	<b>3163754</b>	<b>3130618</b>
<b>Less Operating Expenses:</b>		
Salaries & Related Costs	1351739	1169067
Staff Fares & Allowances	43756	30544
Office Occupancy Expenses	178276	172707
Telephone, Postal & Delivery Costs	294003	321846
Office Equipment Expenses	137956	121701
Office Stationary & Requisites	166965	132433
Printing & Reproduction	357372	347156
Fees & Charges	53443	61539
Public Relations	4664	5988
Special Programs	273183	341840
Consultancy	20000	22400
Written Down Value of Fixed Asset Sold	23682	26592
Depreciation Non-Current Assets	281206	295807
Software Development Costs Written Off	125495	37363
Provision for Recreation Leave	26133	(8626)
Provision for Long Service Leave	26861	(3463)
<b>Total Operating Expenses:</b>	<b>3364734</b>	<b>3074894</b>
Operating Surplus (Deficit) for the Year	(200980)	55724
Retained Surplus/(Accumulated Deficit) at the beginning of the year	842308	786584
Retained Surplus/(Accumulated Deficit) at the end of the year	641328	842308



# VTAC Membership

## Board of Trustees

Professor Alan Gilbert (Chair)  
Ms Sue Christophers  
Professor David James  
Professor Robert Pargetter

Chair, Victorian Vice-Chancellor's Committee  
Office of Training and Further Education  
Vice-Chancellor responsible for VTAC liaison  
Chair, Management Committee

## Management Committee

Professor Robert Pargetter (Chair)  
Mr Barrie Baker  
Professor Tim Brown  
Mr Ray Cologon  
Mr Michael Halls  
Ms Mary Hickey  
Dr Sue Gould  
Dr Anthony Grigg  
Professor Wolfgang L Grichting  
Mr John Maddock  
Mr Ian Marshman  
Professor Helen Praetz  
Mr Geoffrey Rogerson  
Ms Virginia Simmons  
Assoc. Professor Peter Stacey

Monash University  
TAFE sector, South West Institute of TAFE  
The University of Melbourne  
Victoria University of Technology  
Victoria University of Technology  
University of Ballarat  
Deakin University  
Swinburne University of Technology  
Australian Catholic University  
TAFE sector, Gordon Institute of TAFE  
The University of Melbourne  
RMIT University  
VICAD, alternate TAFE member  
TAFE sector, Kangan Institute of TAFE  
La Trobe University

## TER and Scaling Committee

Professor Tim Brown (Chair)  
Dr Rob Hyndman  
Mr John Maddock  
Professor Robert Pargetter  
Assoc. Professor Glenn Rowley  
Assoc. Professor Peter Stacey  
Assoc. Professor Ken Wilson

## Publications and Operations Committee

Mr Ray Cologon (Chair)  
Ms Phyllis Alexander  
Mr Alan Daniels  
Mr Wayne Darnley  
Ms Sue Jellett  
Ms Lyn Hedger  
Mr Russell Hillbrich  
Mr Peter Yates



# Contents

Mission statement	1
Major developments and changes	3
1997 Special Tertiary Admissions Test	5
Section A – System Data	8
Section B – Institutional Type Data	13
Section C – Institutional Data	26
Section D – Area of Interest Data	66
Section E – Preference Data	81
Section F – Age Data	91
Section G – School Data	95
Section H – Scaling Data	97
Victorian Auditor-General’s Report	114

This report covers the activities of the Victorian Tertiary Admissions Centre for the period 1 July 1997 to 30 June 1998.

Following a number of recent reviews focussed on central processing, it was decided to examine VTAC's operations from both a customer service and risk management perspective. Several significant outcomes emerged:

- An internal re-structure to provide enhanced customer focus for VTAC clients, including properly resourced applicant and school helpdesks.
- A series of recommendations and development timelines to cover all risk management areas including computer security, disaster plan recovery, back up arrangements, etc.
- The provision of more staff resources in the information technology area.

This year also saw the culmination of a review of *Guide* publishing and distribution arrangements. It was decided to actively encourage a move toward electronic usage of VTAC publications. The development of the web site embracing the *Guide* and other publications, together with an application process, has reached the final testing stage. The *Guide* will also be available through newsagents for the first year at a small cost and then gradually increasing.

A series of Internet kiosks is being developed with the full cooperation of all institutions for applicants without Internet access.

After consultation with schools and in light of other states' decisions, the introduction of the Equivalent National Tertiary Rank ENTER was announced. This uses the same statistical methodology that has underpinned the conversion table for interstate results for the last two years and will involve all applicants receiving higher values, as TER percentiles will be re-expressed in terms of relevant population data. The mechanics of selection and the rank order produced from VCE results will remain unaltered.

The tertiary sector responded to the VCE review through VTAC. The sector expressed strong support for the VCE while highlighting some issues for discussion and agreed with the recommendations about the inclusion of VET in school programs which will lead to such programs, when reaccredited in the unit 1 to 4 structure, having the same status as other VCE units for tertiary entrance purposes.

VTAC welcomed several new institutions to the system including two interstate universities.

It is with pleasure that I present this report of the Victorian Tertiary Admissions Centre.



Professor Robert Pargetter  
Chair - Management Committee