



Homework – An essential development tool or an unnecessary burden?

August 2014

The Education and Training Committee has tabled its report into *The Approaches to Homework in Victorian Schools* in State Parliament.

The Committee's Chair, Mrs Jan Kronberg MLC, said that the Committee was struck from the outset of the Inquiry by how much debate and widely differing views there is about the value of homework.

"The most authoritative and learned academics and, most importantly, individual school communities, parent and students have differing opinions on the value of homework." Mrs Kronberg said.

Despite differences of opinion about the value of homework, the Committee found a rich harvest of information and the views expressed by the many submissions and witnesses have enabled the Committee to make a significant contribution to what is a long-standing and heated debate in education.

The Committee's report has considered a range of issues including the homework debate and international comparisons, the homework policy landscape in Victoria, some of the factors that might impact on the effectiveness of homework and some of the disadvantages that may arise from homework and what is being done to mitigate these disadvantages.

The report includes 12 key findings related to issues such as

- the positive benefits of homework in developing both academic and life skills, but also the potential for homework to reduce the amount of time available to pursue other important activities and interests;
- the importance of age and stage in the effectiveness of homework, with evidence suggesting homework has some academic benefits for high school students but almost none in primary school;
- the potential for new forms of learning being developed as a result of advances in technology, such as the concept of *Flipped Learning* and their potential impact on homework; and
- and the potential benefits of homework clubs in overcoming some forms of disadvantage.

The Committee received 32 submissions and conducted 16 public hearings and in a field where the evidence is, at best, inconclusive the input of both expert witnesses and members of school communities and service providers was vital in helping the Committee make its key Findings and 11 Recommendations.



Recommendations related to a range of issues, including:

- A review of guidelines and the development of an assessment framework to assist schools in reviewing their own homework policies, based on up-to-date information;
- The facilitation of collaborative lesson and homework planning in Victorian schools, and professional development for teachers to explain current research in homework and to assist in developing capacity in the setting and assessment of homework;
- The further development of new models of learning such as *Flipped Learning* models and the sharing of online resources between school;
- Whether regulatory and accreditation arrangements for private tutors may be justified;
- Professional development for teachers covering the main types of learning disabilities
- A review of homework clubs to ensure their long-term viability.

“We believe that these recommendations will further enhance Victorian schools’ capacity to provide their students with a world class education and enriching the lives of students at all levels.” said Mrs Kronberg.

The report is available on the Committee’s website at www.parliament.vic.gov.au/etc.

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