

Skills First Submission



Overview

Skills First funding is structured to prevent “double-dipping” — a student being subsidised at TAFE and school at the same time.

Home educated students are excluded from both sets of funding: They cannot “single-dip” let alone “double-dip”.

Many home educated students undertake VET courses as a component of their home education program.

Home educated students are the ONLY group of students excluded from funding.

The impact is significant.

The Home Education Network (HEN) represents a third of registered home educators and we survey the wider Victorian home education community regularly. This submission is based on our survey data.

Benefits of Certificate Courses

Undertaking certificates during the compulsory school years assists students to expand skills, explore careers and earn basic qualifications.

Such courses are stepping stones to further education and careers — exactly what the Skills First funding is designed to facilitate.

Our 2018 survey indicated TAFE is the most popular first step from home education.

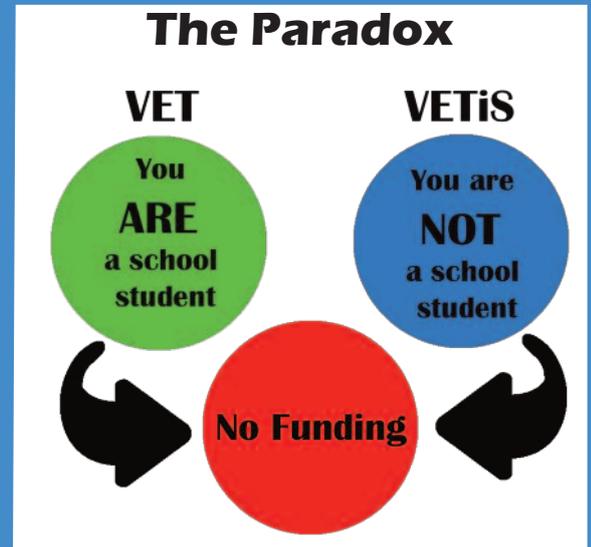
Many home educated students use TAFE as a university transition route.

The Funding Paradox

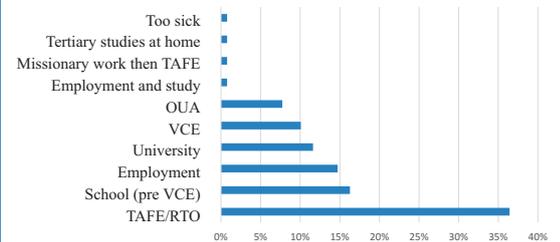
In 2017, the Skills First funding arrangements created a paradox, excluding home educated students from both VET and VETiS funding — one on the basis they are school students, one on the basis they are not.

As a result, home educated students accessing certificate courses must:

- pay significantly higher fees than school students; or
- de-register and re-register after the course; or
- wait until after they are aged 17.

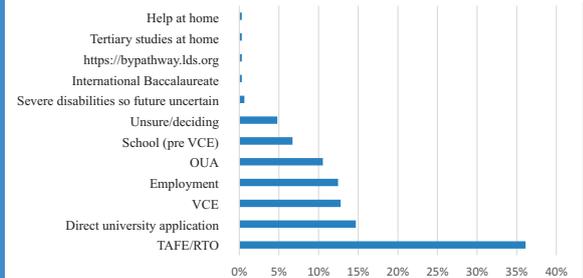


First Steps After Home Education: 130 Alumni



Source: HEN 2018 Survey of the Victorian Home Education Community

The Transition Plans of 313 Victorian Home Educated Teenagers



Source: HEN 2018 Survey of the Victorian Home Education Community

Discrimination

Discrimination is at odds with Skills First Ethos

Skills First discriminates against home educated students.

It unfairly limits their transition options, in many cases after the school system has already failed them. For such students, entering school for VET courses is not an option.

This discrimination is at odds with a policy designed to “gives all Victorians the opportunity to develop the skills they need.”

Inequity

- Home educators pay full fees for VET certificates which school students and school-leavers gain for free.
- Schools are resourced to run VETiS. Home educators receive no funding.
- Home educated students from low-income families are locked out of VET training.
- By contrast, across the border, the [Smart and Skilled policy](#) facilitates the uptake of further education amongst the NSW home education community.

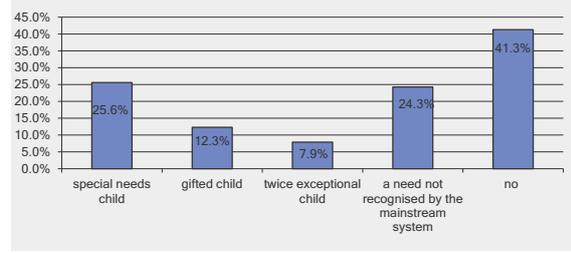
Disability

- At least 25% of home educated children have special needs.
- This cohort is increasing.
- School failed to meet their needs
- These students have lost all funding and services associated with school enrolment
- They are now also locked out of VET funding.
- VET provides a supportive transition route for them.

School Failure

- Home education is undertaken for a variety of valid reasons with 60% of families having previously attended school.
- For 24% home education is a last resort.

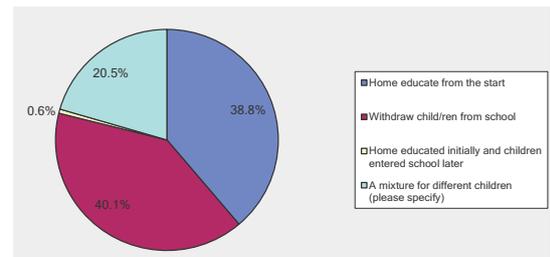
Home Education Involves Diverse Learning Needs



Source: HEN 2016 Survey of the Victorian Home Education Community

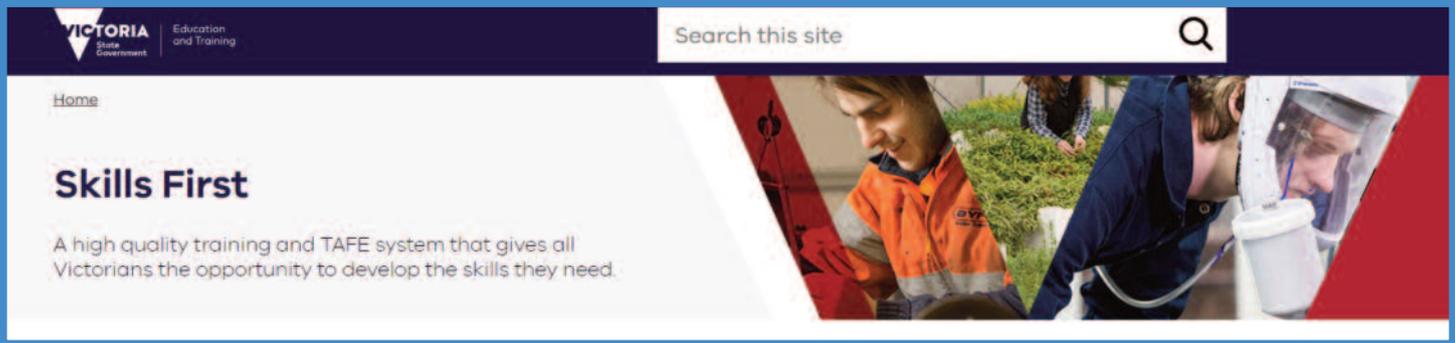
We couldn't consider certificates as the cost was too high.

School Failure Contributes to Home Education



Source: HEN 2016 Survey of the Victorian Home Education Community

If we deregistered we'd lose the Isolated Children's Allowance. Without that, we couldn't afford the cost of a certificate.



The Impacts

83% of home educators with teenagers are negatively impacted by the Skills First funding problem.

The impacts are multi-faceted and encourage de-registration.

For the most vulnerable of home educated students — those with special needs and/or from low-income families, the Skills First paradox locks them out of VET courses until age 17, putting them at significant disadvantage to their school-educated peers.

Registration Complications

The only way for a home educated student to obtain a funded place in a certificate course is to de-register from the VRQA. However:

- A part-time course supplementing home education isn't recognised as full-time education.
- De-registering for part-time courses leaves families in a murky area legally.
- De-registering for short-courses is impractical.

Financial Impact

Full fees put certificate courses beyond the reach of most families.

In addition, there is a complication for families receiving Centrelink payments.

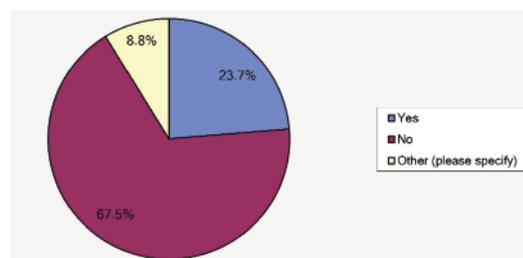
- Home education is a valid exemption from the "mutual obligation" requirements associated with Newstart. De-registration loses this exemption.
- Families receiving the Isolated Children's Allowance or Family Tax Benefit lose those allowances if they de-register.

Limits Options

- To be eligible for VCE via DECV, students must be registered with the VRQA for the 12 months prior. De-registration voids that option.
- Locking home ed students out of TAFE funding closes a university entry route used by many home educators.

Completing a certificate will have to be delayed until after finishing 'school' when they will get funding.

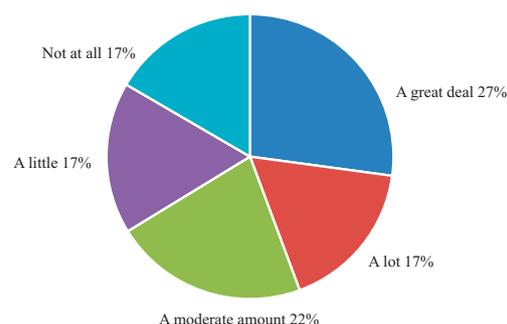
Home Education is often a Last Resort



Source: HEN 2016 Survey of the Victorian Home Education Community

The course cost \$400 instead of \$4000, but de-registration meant she wasn't considered in "full-time" education even though we continued to home educate.

Home Educators with Teenagers Affected



Source: HEN 2018 Survey of the Victorian Home Education Community

We needed the funding so we deregistered, but wish we didn't have to give up the VCE option to pick up a certificate.

Recommendation

Home education is a valid educational option and alumni demonstrate good results – many having used the TAFE pathway to university before this barrier was created.

Today's home educated students have an equal right to subsidised training.

Home education is increasingly sought by special needs families and those whom school has failed.

In using certificate courses, families seek to further their teenagers' education. Funding arrangements should not make it more difficult for them to do so.

We believe the exclusion clause was written in an era when home education was poorly understood. DET is now in a better position to appreciate the validity and effectiveness of home education.

We request that:

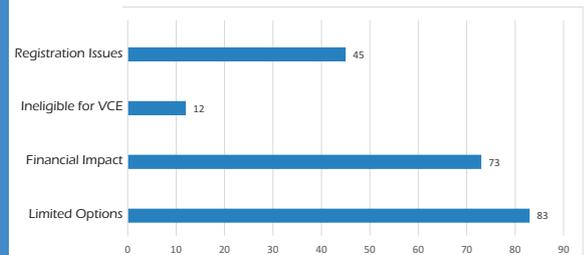
- enrolment in TAFE short and part-time courses is recognised as a valid supplement to registered home education; and
- Skills First be corrected to eliminate the discrimination, and allow registered home educated students access to VET funding in TAFEs.

The recommended action would facilitate the smooth transition of home educated students to further education and work.

Sue Wight

On behalf of the Victorian Home Education Community
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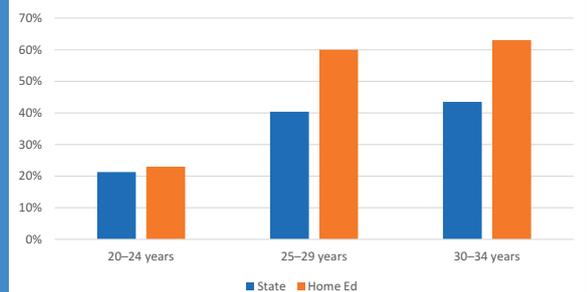
How it Affects Home Education Families



Source: HEN 2018 Survey of the Victorian Home Education Community

We can't advance learning in specific areas of interest until later than we otherwise would. It's very inhibiting.

Home Educated Alumni with a Bachelor Degree or above compared with the Victorian Population



Source: HEN 2018 Survey of the Victorian Home Education Community

Eligibility Exclusions

2.4 Subject to Clause 2.5 of this Schedule 1, an individual is not eligible for training subsidised through the *Skills First* Program under this VET Funding Contract if the individual is:

- a) a student enrolled in a school (excluding a school based Apprentice/Trainee). This includes:
 - i) any government, non-government, independent or Catholic school; or
 - ii) a student registered for home schooling in Victoria.

Government schools are responsible for funding these opportunities for VET within the school curriculum through their Student Resource Package (SRP) allocation, including targeted VET in schools funding. Non-government schools make similar decisions for students on the basis of the resources available to them;