



Summary

Over the past 50 years, learning has increasingly become a 'life long' activity. Children starting school are involved in a range of learning experiences, with the majority attending a kindergarten program. Most children now begin structured learning at kindergarten, and continue beyond the compulsory school age of 15 to complete Year 12 or its educational equivalent. Tertiary education (higher education and vocational education and training) has moved from an elite pursuit to a common experience. Other post-school destinations include apprenticeships, traineeships and straight into the labour force.

Greater participation in education and training has social and economic benefits, both for the individual and the broader society. Extended periods in education for almost all young people have also meant a huge increase in the provision of educational infrastructure in Melbourne, with

numbers of both primary and secondary schools more than doubling since 1951. Enrolment of students in primary schools doubled over that time, while enrolments in secondary schools increased five-fold.

Since 1981, there have been large increases across Melbourne in the proportions of people with university qualifications and skilled vocational qualifications, resulting in a general decrease in the proportion of people without post-school qualifications.

The extension of higher education has been a major infrastructure achievement. Melbourne now has 37 university campuses, most of which have relatively local catchments, illustrating the importance of providing regional access to higher education as the city grows.

At the same time, the concentration of higher education institutions in inner Melbourne continues to play a very important role in the economy,

and has helped to make the city a major centre for international students. In 2004, over half of Melbourne's international students were enrolled in higher education institutions, with the remainder enrolled in vocational education and training, English language colleges and schools.

Vocational education and training, including Technical and Further Education (TAFE) institutes, adult and community education (ACE) centres and private registered training organisations (RTOs), is more widely spread across the city than higher education.

Skill levels have risen considerably in the last decade and there is currently high demand for skilled labour in a number of areas, including trades, information technology and professional occupations.