

**Sponsor: Ivanhoe Girls Grammar School**

**Refuter: City of Greater Bendigo**

## **Textbook Reform in Secondary Schools Bill 2023**

A Bill for an Act to establish an equitable starting point for students through the increased access of school textbooks. The Bill highlights the necessity of textbooks to learning and recognises the financial constraints associated with the purchase of up-to-date resources.

This Bill was created to address the financial and environmental challenges faced by thousands of Victorian students when purchasing school textbooks. The Bill shall address these issues by implementing the Victorian Textbook Equity Scheme (VTES), headed by the Victorian Textbook Equity Board (VTEB). The VTEB shall introduce a new way for students to access textbooks through a library system. The Bill shall also recognise the importance of high-quality learning materials by introducing a scheme to verify that textbooks associated with the scheme are in accordance with the appropriate curriculum. This is to be achieved by the establishment of the List of Certified Textbooks (LCT). This Bill shall both boost access of high-quality resources but reduce the waste generated from discarded textbooks.

A Bill for an Act relating to Textbook Reform in Secondary Schools.

To be enacted by the Y's Victorian Youth Parliament.

## PART I—Preliminary

### Clause 1 Purpose

The main purposes of this act are;

- (a) To increase the accessibility of textbooks to Victorian secondary school students;
- (b) To reduce the waste caused by the individual purchasing of textbooks each year by every student across the state;
- (c) To ensure that high quality textbooks are provided to secondary school students, regardless of their financial status.

### Clause 2 Commencement

This Bill shall commence after receiving assent from the Youth Governor of Victoria.

### Clause 3 Definitions

In this Bill;

- (a) **LCT** means List of Certified Textbooks; a list of textbooks that VTEB has certified as they address all the required topics of the related curriculum or study design;
- (b) **Study Design** means a curriculum designed by VCAA for use in a VCE subject;
- (c) **Textbook** means a physical book used a learning resource for the study of a particular subject by secondary school students, includes novels and other books that are studied in language subjects;
- (d) **VCAA** mean the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority; the statutory authority that provides the Curriculum and VCE study designs to Victorian educational institutions;

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- (e) **VTEB** means the Victorian Textbook Equity Board; the board that oversees VTES;
- (f) **VTES** means the Victorian Textbook Equity Scheme, alternatively referred to as 'the Scheme'.

## **PART II—Establishment**

### **Clause 4 Establishment of the Victorian Textbook Equity Board**

- 4.1 The Victorian Textbook Equity Board (VTEB) shall be established;
- (a) They shall partner with the Victorian Curriculum Assessment Authority (VCAA) to achieve their purpose.
- 4.2 VTEB shall be comprised of;
- (a) Experts from one or more of the following fields;
    - (i) Education, such as teacher and school leadership staff;
    - (ii) Curriculum, such as employees of external organisations which develop and set the curriculum for learning in Victorian schools;
    - (iii) Educational charity and not-for-profit organisations;
    - (iv) Textbook publishers.
  - (b) Representatives which originate from both the Greater Melbourne Area and Regional Victoria, in proportion to the demographic of Victorian students.
- 4.3 VTEB shall oversee a variety of functions including, but not limited to;
- (a) Facilitation of the textbook review process;
  - (b) Processing of funding applications;
  - (c) Managing the implementation of the Victorian Textbook Equity Scheme (VTES);
  - (d) Raise awareness of the VTES within the education community.

**Clause 5 Establishment of the List of Verified Textbooks**

- 5.1 Textbook publishers shall submit new materials to VTEB, who shall assess it based on its adherence to the relevant established curriculum;
- (a) If the textbook under review satisfies the relevant curriculum, it shall;
    - (i) Be placed on the List of Certified Textbooks (LCT, which is publicly accessible;
    - (ii) Add the VTEB logo to its cover design to establish an official endorsement.
- 5.2 The VTEB shall not;
- (a) Denounce, discourage, or restrict the use of textbooks not included on the LCT;
  - (b) Require or otherwise mandate schools to purchase textbooks on the basis that they are included on the LCT;
  - (c) Exclude a textbook from the LCT based on any other factor than its failure to satisfy the relevant curriculum.

**Clause 6 Funding Allocation to Schools**

- 6.1 VTEB shall be responsible for the management of funds, including;
- (a) Reviewing the needs of schools at the end of each year and adjusting funding accordingly;
  - (b) Processing funding applications;
  - (c) Approving funding applications;
  - (d) Declining funding applications.
- 6.2 Funding shall be calculated based on;
- (a) The size of a cohort;
    - (i) Cohorts shall be calculated annually;

- (ii) Schools shall receive funding for students at commencement of Year 7 and Year 10, each of which being considered one (1) cohort;
    - (iii) Funding shall be calculated so that it is adequate for the total cohort to access textbooks for three years, until they either reach Year 10, or complete Year 12.
  - (b) The reasonable cost of textbooks which are required for the year levels that each cohort shall be entering.
- 6.3 Additional funding may be accessed by schools upon application and in extraordinary circumstances.
- 6.4 Funding shall be deposited directly to schools.
- 6.5 Funding granted by the VTEB shall only be accessible for the purchase of textbooks.

**Clause 7 Establishing a Textbook Library System Within Schools**

- 7.1 Textbooks purchased using VTEB funding shall be integrated in the existing library system. They shall;
- (a) Be available at no cost to students;
  - (b) Be able to be borrowed for up to two years at a time;
  - (c) Be subject to any pre-existing library penalty policy set forth by the school's library.

**Clause 8 Eligibility**

- 8.1 All state schools shall be included in the scheme;
- (a) Participation in the VTES for these schools shall be mandatory;
  - (b) These schools shall be expected to submit data for the calculation of funding (see clause 6) annually from the commencement of this Bill.

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- 8.2 Independent schools shall be able to apply for the same funding scheme at their own will.
- 8.3 Home-schooled students who are enrolled as such through the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority shall be eligible to apply for reimbursements of textbooks at the same rate applied to schools;
  - (a) Applications for reimbursement shall be reviewed on a case-by-case basis by the VTEB.