Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority

Review of the
Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning

Final Report

November 2004
Preface

The focus of the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA) review of the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) was to review the current structure of the certificate prior to its reaccreditation in 2006.

At all of the focus group meetings there was numerous, glowing and unsolicited comments on the success of VCAL from providers. Contributors spoke about VCAL engaging students, providing opportunities for students to complete their senior secondary education and building stronger links with the community.

The VCAA would like to take this opportunity to thank all the stakeholders who participated in the VCAL Review. In particular, the VCAA would like to recognise the work of the VCAL Regional Consultants and the Executive Officers of the Local Learning and Employment Networks (LLEN) in helping to organise the regional focus group meetings.
Executive Summary

Terms of Reference
In evaluating the certificate the VCAL Review Committee reviewed the current structure of VCAL, assessed the need for the development of further accredited VCAL units and assessed the need for any further development of VCAL.

Consultation
To collect feedback from stakeholders and to support the development of the recommendation/s the VCAL Review Committee:
- organised six focus group meetings
- conducted stakeholder consultation meetings
- provided an opportunity for stakeholders who could not access a focus group meeting to have input into the VCAL review via the VCAA website.

A total of 334 participants responded to the VCAL review.

Recommendation Summary

Recommendation 1
That the following literacy and numeracy VCAL units be developed for Foundation level VCAL:
- Reading and Writing Skills – Foundation
- Oral Communication Skills – Foundation
- Numeracy Skills – Foundation.

Recommendation 2
That specific reference to information and communications technology (ICT) skills, for the workplace, is included in the Terms of Reference for the review when the VCAL units are being reviewed.

That professional development and curriculum resources be provided/developed for teachers which highlight how ICT skills can be integrated into VCAL units.

Recommendation 3
That the current requirement that a learning program be made up of accredited curriculum that leads to a minimum of 10 credits be maintained.

That the number of credits at the level of the VCAL award be increased to six, of which one must be for literacy and one must be for a VCAL Personal Development Skills unit.
**Recommendation 4**
That the current requirement that accredited Vocational Education and Training (VET) curriculum components be a compulsory component for VCAL Intermediate and Senior levels, to the value of one credit, for Industry Specific Skills be maintained.

**Recommendation 5**
That an extra numeracy unit not be developed at the Intermediate level because the addition of a VCAL numeracy unit at the Foundation level will mean that there are four VCAL numeracy units which students could undertake over a two year program.

**Recommendation 6**
That both the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority and the Victorian Qualifications Authority undertake consultation with employers, Industry Training Boards, representatives from Technical and Further Education (TAFE) institutes, employer organisations and the Trades Hall VET Committee to discuss the issues surrounding the level of VET training for senior secondary students.

**Recommendation 7**
That the quality assurance process for VCAL units continues beyond 2005.

**Recommendation 8**
That VCAL units be reviewed over a five year cycle.
Introduction

The Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) was accredited by the Victorian Qualifications Authority (VQA) in 2002 for an initial period of three years. The original VCAL Course Accreditation Document required the VCAL to be ‘formally reviewed in 2004’. Prior to considering the reaccreditation of the VCAL, the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA) is undertaking a review of the qualification.

Timeline

The Terms of Reference and members of the VCAL Review Committee were approved by the VCAA Post-compulsory Curriculum and Assessment Committee on 28 April 2004.

Consultation meetings with stakeholders were held during May to July 2004.

An Interim Report for the Post-compulsory Curriculum and Assessment Committee was prepared for the 14 July meeting.

The Terms of Reference stated that the VCAL Review Committee will respond to the issues raised during consultation and prepare the final report for approval by the VCAA by 10 November 2004.

Terms of Reference

In evaluating the certificate the VCAL Review Committee will:

- review the current structure of VCAL including VCAL requirements, strands (Work Related Skills, Industry Specific Skills, Personal Development Skills, and Literacy and Numeracy Skills) and the three levels in VCAL
- assess the need for the development of further accredited VCAL units
- assess the need for any further development of VCAL.

VCAL Review Committee Membership

Attachment 1 outlines the membership of the VCAL Review Committee. The members each represent one of the following stakeholder groups:

- Victorian Qualifications Authority
- Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority
- VCAL Regional Consultant
- Catholic Education Office
- Australian Education Union
- Employer representative – Group Training Association of Victoria
- Four practising VCAL teachers
- Victorian Association of State Secondary Principals
- Local Learning and Employment Network (LLEN)
- The University of Melbourne – Centre for Post-compulsory Education and Lifelong Learning.
Consultation

To collect feedback from stakeholders and to support the development of the recommendation/s the Review Committee:

- organised six focus group meetings
- conducted stakeholder consultation meetings
- provided an opportunity for stakeholders who could not access a focus group meeting to have input into the VCAL review via the VCAA website.

A set of Review Questions (Attachment 2) was prepared to assist stakeholders in preparing their responses.

Focus group meetings

Based on an analysis of the VCAL enrolment data six focus group meetings were organised. Both the VCAL Regional Consultants and the Executive Officers for the LLENs provided strong support for the review and were instrumental in encouraging stakeholders to attend the focus group meetings. Attachment 3 outlines the details for the focus group meetings.

Stakeholder consultation meetings

The VCAL Review Executive Officer and on occasions members of the VCAL Review Committee met with the following key interest groups:

- Department of Education and Training Central Office staff. Representatives from the Office of School Education, Office of Learning and Teaching, Office of Training and Tertiary Education, Adult Community and Further Education, Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority and the Victorian Qualifications Authority
- members of the Industry Training Board Association
- VCAL Coordinators, teachers, employers, representatives from Smart Geelong LLEN and the Geelong Regional Vocational Education Council in the Barwon South West region (Geelong)
- Group Training Australia field officers and employers from industry associations.

Online submission for VCAL Review

Those stakeholders who were unable to attend the focus group meetings were invited to provide input via the VCAA website. For five weeks (23 June to 30 July 2004) interested parties could respond to the review at the following web address http://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/vcal/

Summary

The following table provides a summary of the stakeholders who participated in the consultation process for the VCAL review.

A total of 334 participants responded to the VCAL review.
# VCAL Review Summary

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Employers/Employer Groups, e.g. Group Training: 26

Local Community Partnerships: 5

School Based New Apprenticeship Coordinators: 4

Industry Training Boards Association: 7

LLENs: 29

Community Groups, e.g. JPP, youth services: 5

DE&T Central Office: 15

VCAL/Later Years Regional Consultants: 6

**Sub Total**: 97

**TOTAL**: 189

**GRAND TOTAL**: 334

1. Included Industry Training Boards Executive Officers and Trade Unions representatives.

Recommendations

After discussion of the consultation comments by the VCAL Review Committee, the Recommendation Sub Committee was asked to prepare recommendations in the areas listed below.

1. The development of Foundation Literacy and Numeracy VCAL units.

2. The development of ICT unit/s and the option of including ICT as either an additional strand or be included in the learning outcomes in one or more of the existing VCAL strands.

3. Students are currently awarded a certificate on successful completion of a minimum of 10 credits; consideration be given to reduce this to 8 credits. Currently five credits must be at the award level that the student is enrolled in; consideration be given to increase this to 6 or 7 credits at the award level.

4. VET funding and provision may compromise the delivery of VCAL and the compulsory requirement of VET for VCAL Intermediate and Senior students is restricting access for VCAL students.

5. The development of two VCAL Numeracy units at Intermediate level.

6. The appropriate level of VET training for VCAL students.

7. The need to continue quality assurance (QA) process for VCAL beyond 2005.

8. The desirability of regularly reviewing VCAL units. VCE study designs are reviewed every three to five years to ensure that their subject content is relevant and the subject is meeting the needs of the student cohort. A similar process is followed in the VET sector where Training Packages are reviewed regularly.

Recommendation 1

Summary of the discussion from the Recommendations Review Sub Committee

The following points were raised at the VCAL Recommendations Review Sub committee meeting:

- No VCAL literacy and numeracy units were initially developed for Foundation VCAL because the Certificate I in General Education – Adults (CGEA), had a focus on developing skills for students with specific weakness in literacy and numeracy and therefore was not considered suitable for delivery in general classroom programs for Foundation level VCAL.
- Any new VCAL literacy and numeracy units should draw on material not only from the CGEA but other Further Education certificates.
- Any new units should maintain the current literacy format found in other VCAL literacy and numeracy units – Units in Reading and Writing and Oral Communication.
- There should be only one numeracy unit developed for Foundation VCAL.
Recommendation

That the following literacy and numeracy VCAL units be developed for Foundation level VCAL:

Reading and Writing Skills – Foundation
Oral Communication Skills – Foundation
Numeracy Skills – Foundation.

That the literacy skills units have a similar structure to the Intermediate and Senior VCAL literacy skills units.

That where the VCAL Literacy Skills units at Foundation level are selected as the sole means of fulfilling the literacy requirement for the VCAL award level in which the student is enrolled, the VCAL Literacy Skills Reading and Writing unit must be selected for that purpose.

Recommendation 2

Summary of Discussion from the Recommendations Review Sub Committee

The following points were raised at the VCAL Recommendations Review Sub committee meeting:

• another compulsory strand would lead to overcrowding and reduce the flexibility of the VCAL
• ICT is an important component in the VCAL and one that employers value.
• P–10 curriculum and VCE embed ICT skills into the curriculum and VCAL could adopt a similar approach
• professional development and promotion of best practice examples should be provided for schools on integrating ICT into VCAL
• ICT should be a learning tool for all activities.

Recommendation

That when the VCAL units are being reviewed, consideration of specific reference to ICT skills, for the workplace, be included in the terms of reference for the review.

That professional development and curriculum resources be developed for teachers which highlight how ICT skills can be integrated into VCAL units.

Recommendation 3

Summary of Discussion from the Recommendations Review Sub Committee

The following points were raised at the VCAL Recommendations Review Sub committee meeting:

• consideration needs to be given to increasing the number of credits at the level of the VCAL award
• currently it is possible for two VCAL students who both have an Intermediate VCAL Certificate to have very different certificates – one may have 5 Intermediate credits and the other have 10 Intermediate credits
• VCE students complete a minimum of 16 units over two years, VCAL students can complete a minimum of 15 units over two years to attain two certificates
• need to maintain the integrity of the VCAL and therefore not lower the number of units required to successfully complete the VCAL
• the availability of mid-year certificates caters for students who are not able to achieve the current requirement in one year
• many students currently complete 6–8 units or more at the award level. Any increase in the number of units would therefore not necessarily disadvantage students.

Recommendation

That the current requirement that a learning program be made up of accredited curriculum that leads to a minimum of 10 credits be maintained.

That the number of credits at the level of the VCAL award be increased to six of which one must be for literacy and one must be for a VCAL Personal Development Skills unit.

Recommendation 4

Summary of discussion from the Recommendations Review Sub Committee

The following points were raised at the VCAL Recommendations Review Sub committee meeting:
• VET programs are resource intensive and expensive to deliver, particularly for regional providers
• this is an issue not only for VCAL students but all senior students undertaking VET
• the structure of VCAL is the primary focus of this review, VET funding is not a VCAL structure issue
• VET is an essential element to a VCAL certificate
• reference to VET funding should be included in the VCAL Review Report.

Recommendation

The current requirement that accredited Vocational Education and Training curriculum components be a compulsory component for VCAL Intermediate and Senior levels, to the value of one credit, for Industry Specific Skills is maintained.

Recommendation 5

Discussions from the Recommendations Review Sub Committee

That the following points were raised at the VCAL Recommendations Review Sub committee meeting:
• there is a wide range of numeracy/mathematics units available for VCAL students
• the proposed new numeracy unit at Foundation level will allow Intermediate students to complete a Foundation numeracy unit in Semester 1 and Intermediate numeracy unit in Semester 2.
Recommendation

That an extra numeracy unit should not be developed at the Intermediate level because the addition of a VCAL numeracy unit at the Foundation level will mean that there are four VCAL numeracy units which students could undertake over a two year program.

Recommendation 6

Summary of discussion from the Recommendations Review Sub Committee

The following points were raised at the VCAL Recommendations Review Sub committee meeting:

- the Registered Training Organisation (RTO) is responsible for the quality assurance of certificates included on its scope of registration
- if a Certificate III or IV requires delivery in the workplace that is the responsibility of the RTO
- professional development is needed for providers and RTOs on the appropriate VET enrolments for VCAL students
- do not want to disadvantage VCAL students if a Certificate III or IV is not accepted by employers
- this issue, of the appropriate level of VET training for school students, is not specific to VCAL students.

Recommendation:

That both the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority and the Victorian Qualifications Authority undertake consultation with employers, Industry Training Boards representatives from TAFE institutes, employer organisations and the Trades Hall VET Committee to discuss the issues surrounding the level of VET training for senior secondary students.

Recommendation 7

Summary of Discussion from the Recommendations Review Sub Committee

The following points were raised at the VCAL Recommendations Review Sub committee meeting:

- the quality assurance process is not part of the formal accreditation of the VCAL certificate but gives creditability to the certificate
- QA is now considered an integral part of the VCAL certificate
- QA provides excellent professional development and networking opportunities for providers.

Recommendation:

That the quality assurance process for VCAL units continues beyond 2005.
Recommendation 8

VCE Unit study designs are reviewed every three to five years to ensure that their subject content is relevant and the subject is meeting the needs of the student cohort. A similar process is followed in the VET sector where Training Packages are reviewed regularly. The VCAL Review Recommendations Sub committee believes that a similar process should be followed with the VCAL units.

This would provide an opportunity to
- review the learning outcomes for each of the VCAL strands
- include reference to ICT skills in the learning outcomes for the existing VCAL strands.

The following is a proposed review cycle:
- 2005 Personal Development Skills units – all levels
- 2006 Work Related Skills units – all levels
- 2007 Literacy and Numeracy Skills units – all levels.

Recommendation:
That VCAL units to be reviewed over a five year cycle starting with the cycle outlined below.

2005 Personal Development Skills units – all levels
2006 Work Related Skills units – all levels
2007 Literacy and Numeracy Skills units – all levels.
Consultation comments
A summary of comments from stakeholders, who participated in the VCAL Review, was presented to the VCAL Review Committee at the 4 August meeting. After extensive discussion of the comments the following areas were proposed for further consideration and formed the basis for the development of recommendation/s. The areas include:

- credits for successful completion of a VCAL certificate and the minimum number of VCAL units for a student’s learning program
- VET units/programs and Industry Specific Skills
- Foundation Literacy and Numeracy VCAL units
- additional VCAL Numeracy units
- other VCAL units to be developed – ICT skills
- the level of VET training for VCAL students
- quality assurance and audit procedures
- VCAL learning outcomes.
VCAL REVIEW COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

The following key stakeholders have been invited to join the VCAL Review Committee. These proposed members are experienced in delivering VCAL in different education sectors, are key stakeholders or have an education policy background.

**Victorian Qualifications Authority – Annette Whiter (Senior Policy Officer)**
Annette Whiter is a Senior Policy Officer in the VQA. Ms Whiter is currently attached to the VCAL Unit at the VQA. Previously, she was a Later Years curriculum consultant at the Department of Education and Training Northern Metropolitan Region.

**Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority – David Gallagher (VCAL Project Manager) Executive Officer for the VCAL Review Committee.**
Mr Gallagher has over 30 years of experience as a teacher, careers teacher, VET coordinator and as a project officer in the Department of Education and Training. He held the position as Manager, VET in Schools before accepting the position as VCAL Project Manager at the VCAA in January 2004.

**VCAL Regional Consultant – Graham Lee VCAL Regional Consultant Barwon South West**
Mr Graham Lee has a Graduate Diploma of Computing, Deakin University, 1981, Diploma of Education, Melbourne University, 1973 and Bachelor of Science, (honours) Melbourne University, 1972. He has 31 years of experience in education and he was the VCAL Trial Coordinator at Corio Bay Senior College in 2002, and a member of the VCAL Quality Assurance Panel for Barwon South West (BSW) Region. Since 2003 he has been the BSW VCAL Regional Consultant.

**Catholic Education Officer – Peter Devery**
Peter Devery leads a team specialising in initiatives related to the post-compulsory years of schooling. This includes responsibility for strategic planning, professional development and liaising with Government and external agencies with respect to aspects of post-compulsory education and training. A major focus of his work is to coordinate the development, implementation and evaluation of initiatives in VET and the post-compulsory years of schooling in Catholic schools. This includes overseeing the introduction of VCAL in Catholic schools.
Australian Education Union – Meredith Peace
Meredith Peace has been a secondary teacher since 1987. Currently she is the Deputy Vice President (Secondary) of the Australian Education Union, Victorian Branch. She has held this position since 2001, with responsibility for general secondary and post compulsory curriculum issues. She has been a member of the VCAL Reference group since its inception and has been on several VCAL committees during that time.

Pam Jonas – Group Training Australia (Manager Policy and Research)
Pam Jonas is the Manager, Policy and Research for Group Training Australia – Victoria. She has over twenty years of experience in the fields of education, training, and employment policy. Her experience and expertise has been developed in the industry, education and community sectors and applied in a variety of leadership, management, research, policy, and teaching positions. Pam has been a board member of the Victorian Qualifications Authority and has been closely involved with the development, implementation and evaluation of the VCAL.

Four practising VCAL teachers (two from Government sector, one from an ACE and one from a TAFE Institute)
Sandy Toohey has a Graduate Diploma Education, University of Melbourne (1992), Bachelor of Business, Monash University (1984), Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training, Chisholm Institute (1999) and a RSA Cambridge Certificate TEFLA Institute of English, Melbourne (1989). Sandy works part time as the VCAL Coordinator at Box Hill Senior Secondary College and has coordinated their VCAL programs since the pilot in 2002. Last year the college piloted a thematic VCAL in Film and Television. She has also been involved in a joint project funded by the Office of Training and Tertiary Education for the development of Learning Resources to support the delivery of a themed VCAL in Media and Communications.

Christine Newcombe has a Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Letters, Diploma of Education, Certificate in Teaching English as a Second Language and a Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training. She has been teaching since 1974 and is currently the VCAL and VET Coordinator at Sunbury Secondary College.

Craig Moore has a Bachelor of Visual Art and Graduate Diploma in Education (Secondary). In 2001, he was appointed as the Managed Individual Pathways/Youth Pathways Program and VCE Support Program Coordinator at the University of Ballarat. In late 2002, Craig was appointed as VCAL Coordinator; he is also involved in teaching a number of VCAL units. In 2004 the program at Ballarat University has expanded from a single Intermediate group to three Intermediate groups (including a ‘pilot’ themed Auto, a Hair and Beauty specific, and a ‘General’ group) and a Senior group.

Jenny Coutts is a trained primary teacher and has taught in the south-eastern suburbs of Melbourne before moving to Bairnsdale. She has taught adult literacy in the ACE sector for the past nine years. During this time, she coordinated and delivered a Certificate in General Education Adult program to at risk students within the Bairnsdale Secondary College for three years. During 2003 she delivered Foundation VCAL literacy, numeracy and personal development strands at Lakes Entrance Secondary College. This year she is working with a group of disengaged students from Lakes Entrance outside the school setting.
Representative from Victorian Association of State Secondary Principals

Murray Johnston has been employed in various roles with the Department of Education and Training for the last 29 years. During this period of time he has been a TAFE Executive Officer (Applied Art Standing Committee), Student Welfare Coordinator, Classroom Teacher, Careers Coordinator, Assistant Principal and Principal. Murray has had an extensive employment in Industry, including hospitality and the manufacturing sectors.

Murray is currently Principal at Western Port Secondary College and has been intensively involved in Vocational Education through membership of the Peninsula Vocational and Educational Training Committee (PVET), the trialling of the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning at WPSC, and the development of the Pelican Pantry training initiative in Hastings. Pelican Pantry is a 130 seat training restaurant located directly in the tourist precinct.

Murray’s qualifications include Bachelor of Arts (Monash), Bachelor of Education (Monash), Diploma of Art (Prahran College), Diploma of Education (SCV Hawthorn).

Representative from Local Learning and Employment Network

Jennifer Hippisley is the Executive Officer of the Goulburn Murray LLEN (GMLLEN) covering the Local Government areas of Moira, City of Greater Shepparton and Strathbogie.

GMLLEN facilitated the submission of an application to the VQA to fund and support a Themed Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning VCAL Pilot program to be trialled in 2003 in Shepparton. This program has been successful and runs again in 2004.

GMLLEN provides support for VCAL, VET, MIPS and career teachers, leveraging change in knowledge and behaviour by providing professional development to these groups and linking them to LLENs PLACE, local youth organisations and industry and employers.

John Polesel Centre for Post-compulsory Education and Lifelong Learning

The University of Melbourne

Dr John Polesel has a PhD (University of Melbourne), Master of Education (University of Melbourne), Graduate Diploma Inter-Ethnic Studies and Education (Melbourne CAE), Diploma of Education (University of Melbourne) and a Bachelor of Arts – Honours (University of Melbourne).

Dr John Polesel is a Principal Research Fellow and Deputy Director of the Centre for Post-compulsory Education and Lifelong Learning (CPELL) at the University of Melbourne. His experience as a teacher and policy officer in the Victorian Department of Education has provided a basis for his current research into post-compulsory education and pathways, vocational education and training, and education systems and policy. He is particularly interested in the role played by VET in Schools programs and he has been responsible for tracking and analysing the destinations of VET in Schools graduates in Victoria over the last seven years. He is also interested in models of post-compulsory education and training in Australia and internationally.

John Polesel is currently managing the On Track project, a major Department of Education and Training initiative to track all Victorian school leavers into their study and labour market destinations.
Attachment 2

VCAL Review Committee Consultation Questions

Background

The VCAL was accredited by the Victorian Qualifications Authority in 2002 for an initial period of three years. Prior to considering the reaccreditation of the VCAL, the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority is undertaking a review of the qualification with the following terms of reference:

- review the current qualification structure of VCAL including VCAL requirements, strands (Work Related Skills, Industry Specific Skills, Personal Development Skills, and Literacy and Numeracy Skills) and the three levels in VCAL;
- assess the need for the development of further accredited VCAL units; and
- assess the need for any further development of the VCAL.

A VCAL Review Committee with members drawn from the VCAL practitioners and key stakeholder groups has been established to conduct the review. Input into the review is crucial and will be sought through a consultation process and a series of regional meetings to be conducted in June and July, 2004. The review and consultation process will focus on the qualification aspects of VCAL rather than course delivery.

Review Questions

The VCAL Review Committee has developed the following questions to guide the consultation process.

- Are the current award levels and course requirements for VCAL Foundation, Intermediate, Senior and Senior Extension meeting the learning and pathway needs of students?
- Are the current course requirements for Themed VCAL programs meeting the learning and pathway needs of students?
- Is there a need to develop additional VCAL units and if so, in which strand/s and or level/s?
- Are the Vocational Education and Training, and Further Education certificate levels and the VCE appropriate to students at each VCAL award level?
- Are there changes needed to the assessment requirements for VCAL certificates?
- Are there any other comments you wish to make about the VCAL?

The Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning is a senior secondary certificate for Years 11 and 12 students. Stakeholders who wish to provide input into the need for applied learning principles to be incorporated into Year 9 and 10 curriculum should respond to the VCAA *Victorian Curriculum Reform A Framework for Essential Learning*. The VCAA is providing regional seminars and an online facility for stakeholders to respond the Curriculum Reform Project.
### VCAL Review Regional Focus Group Meeting Details

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<td>NMR Ross Patterson</td>
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<td>Telephone: 9881 0227</td>
<td>Kingston Mornington</td>
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<td>SMR Emanuel Merambeliotis</td>
<td>Peninsula</td>
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<td>Telephone: 9794 3548</td>
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<td>29 Jul</td>
<td>Goulburn North East</td>
<td>Merilyn Gander</td>
<td>NE Tracks</td>
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<tr>
<td>481 Wyndam Street Shepparton 3632</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Telephone: 5761 2113</td>
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