

## STUDENT PARTICIPATION IN THE CURRICULUM: A COMPARISON OF STUDENTS STUDYING IN METROPOLITAN, RURAL AND REMOTE VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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### Abstract

This paper reports on one aspect of a larger DEET-funded project, administered by the Australian Council for Educational Research, into curriculum provision in rural schools. The paper uses the 1990 Victorian SCOPE data to describe and compare the participation at Year 12 in different curriculum areas and in different subjects of students studying in schools defined as metropolitan, rural or remote. The paper also examines to what extent participation is affected by the personal and social background characteristics of students studying in different locations.

### Introduction

This paper is part of a larger project on curriculum provision in rural schools being conducted by the Australian Council for Educational Research on behalf of the Department of Employment, Education and Training. It examines student participation in the curriculum at Year 12 in Victorian government secondary schools. Comparisons of student participation in metropolitan, rural and remote schools are made and, within those categorisations of "rurality", the participation rates of different groups of students, classified by personal and social background, are also investigated. The report is based on information from Victorian schools and generalizations about participation in the curriculum in rural, remote and metropolitan Australian schools are not suggested.

### Data Source

The information is based on the Victorian SCOPE (Students' Choice of Occupations and Paths in Education) report for 1990.<sup>1</sup> The SCOPE project was initiated in 1984 and has presented annual reports through to 1990 at which point the project was terminated.

The annual surveys were sent to all Years 10, 11 and 12 students in Victorian schools and were designed to collect information on students' participation in the curriculum and their future educational and occupational plans. For the purpose of this

report, data concerning Year 12 curriculum participation of different groups of students from government schools have been extracted.

### Definition of Rurality

In line with the definitions employed by the Commonwealth Department of Primary Industries and Energy (DPIE) and Department of Health, Housing and Community Services (DHHCS), for the purpose of this study a distinction has been made between students studying in schools located in metropolitan, rural and remote areas. The classifications were not specifically designed to measure remoteness, although the index used provides a measure of remoteness at the Statistical Local Area or Local Government Area level (DPIE 1991).

One difficulty associated with such a definition is that it treats rural and remote as mutually exclusive zones. With some exceptions this is not strictly correct because remote Australia, as defined by the DPIE and DHHCS, would also be rural in character.

In the classifications used, metropolitan included the capital cities and other large metropolitan areas of population 100,000 or more. Rural zones are distinguished from remote zones in the classification through the use of an index of remoteness which takes into account distance from the nearest provincial (or larger) city, distance from the State capital, distance from metropolitan areas and cities of population 10,000 to 24,999, and population density. The rural zone consists of those nonmetropolitan areas whose index of remoteness is less than 10 and includes provincial cities (population 25,000 or more), small rural cities (population 10,000 or more) and other rural areas. The remote zone includes those nonmetropolitan areas whose index of remoteness is greater than 10 and includes large remote towns (population 5,000 or more) and other remote areas.<sup>2</sup>

The zones are based on Statistical Local Areas (SLA) and can be defined on a State or national basis. While they are based on SLAs, the classification can be determined by postcode since all postcodes are capable of being and have been classified into SLAs.

In the present study each school, and therefore each student in that school, was assigned a code (metropolitan, rural or remote) based initially on the postcode of that school. It should be stressed therefore that the measure used in this study is an aggregated measure, aggregated to the school level, and is not a

measure based on the students' address. Information on students' addresses was not available from the SCOPE survey. As the school is responsible for providing the curriculum, an aggregated measure would seem in any case to be quite appropriate for the purposes of this study.

Of the 17, 184 students in the sample for which information was available on the location of their schools<sup>3</sup>, 27 per cent were in schools defined as rural, 2 per cent in schools defined as remote and 71 per cent in schools defined as metropolitan. Similarly, of the 313 schools that responded to the survey and for which information on school location was available, 34 per cent were defined as rural, 4 per cent were defined as remote and 62 per cent were defined as metropolitan.

### Response Rates

In excess of 80 per cent of government schools responded to the 1990 SCOPE survey and this resulted in a student response rate of around 60 per cent of all Year 12 students in government schools.

### Curriculum Data

In the 1990 SCOPE survey, students indicated whether they were currently studying a range of subjects which was listed in the questionnaire. Analyses are possible at the individual subject level or at some aggregated level. In the present study the main focus is on the fourteen curriculum areas identified by Ainley, Jones & Navaratnam (1990) in their national study of subject choice in senior secondary schools.

The fourteen curriculum areas used in this study are listed in Table 1 with examples of subjects that are included in the areas.

The 1990 SCOPE survey assumed that all Year 12 subjects were year length. While this is likely to be true in the great majority of cases it is possible that some semester length courses may have been included. An analysis of the number of subjects taken by students suggested some anomalies in the data with the minimum being 0 and the maximum being 21. To overcome these anomalies, in the analyses presented in this report only students studying between 3 and 8 subjects are included. This resulted in a drop of the sample size of 328 students from 17, 647 to 17, 319. It has been assumed for the purpose of creating enrolment indices, given that there is no information to the contrary, that each of these 3-8 subjects are year length.

Table 1 Curriculum areas used in the study

Curriculum Areas

Subject examples

English

Mathematics

Humanities and Social Sciences

Economics and Business

Biology and Other Sciences

Physical Sciences

Creative and Performing Arts

Technical Studies

Home Science

Physical Education

Languages Other Than English

Computer Studies

Agriculture

## Other

English, English as a Second Language, English Literature

Change and Approximation, Reasoning and Data, Space and Number,  
Maths A, Maths B, Maths C, Business Maths, Maths at Work

Australian Studies, Australian History, European History,  
Geography, Politics, Social Studies, Psychology

Accounting, Business Education, Small Business Management,  
Economics, Legal Studies, Shorthand, Office Practice, Word  
Processing

Biology, Science, Human and Social Biology, Environmental  
Science, Geology

Physics, Chemistry

Art, Creative Arts, Dance, Drama, Media Studies, Music

Automotive Practices, Catering, Building Graphics, Engineering  
Graphics, Graphic Communication, Electrical or Electronic  
Practices, Engineering Workshop Practices, Metalcraft, Plastics,  
Material Studies, Textiles, Woodcraft, Woodwork

Home Economics

Health Education, Outdoor Education, Physical Education

French, German, Italian, Greek, Chinese, Indonesian, Japanese

Computer Science, Computer Studies, Information Technology

Agriculture

Biblical Studies

## Student Background

The SCOPE data allow for information on participation in the curriculum of three student groups commonly referred to in the literature on equity or social justice in education: girls, Kooris and students from different social status backgrounds. In addition, information on language spoken in the home allows for some insights into the participation in the curriculum of

students from non-English-speaking backgrounds—another group identified in that literature—although it should be warned that some students speaking English in the home will almost definitely come from non-English-speaking backgrounds and, though less likely, some speaking another language may possibly come from an English-speaking background.

In this paper, results for three of these social justice groups are presented: gender, Koori status and language status. As noted, the definition of non-English-speaking background used in the 1990 SCOPE survey is based on a question concerning the language spoken at home (students are asked to specify a language from a list of 25). For the purpose of this report, a distinction has been made between English speakers and non-English speakers. Information on gender and Koori status is based on student self reporting.

#### Organisation of the Data

Two types of information are provided in this report. The first

is the percentage of students participating in different subjects or curriculum areas and the second is an enrolment index developed by Ainley, Jones and Navaratnam (1990).

The enrolment index for a curriculum area is a weighted percentage of enrolments and the sum of the values of the enrolment index over all curriculum areas is 100. The index is defined as the sum of the equivalent full-year enrolments in a given curriculum area divided by the total number of equivalent full-year enrolments in all areas (Ainley, Jones and Navaratnam 1990:8).

#### Student Participation in the Curriculum in Metropolitan, Rural and Remote Schools

Typically in 1990 students in Year 12 in Victorian government schools studied 5 subjects. This was so no matter the location of the school.

Table 2 shows the percentage of students in rural, remote and metropolitan schools who studied either one or more than one subject in each of the fourteen curriculum areas identified earlier.

Table 2 Percentage of students in rural, remote and metropolitan schools enrolled in one subject and more than one

subject in different curriculum areas, Year 12, Victorian government schools, 1990

	Rural (n=4589)		Remote (n=317)		Metro (n=11959)						
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	
More							One	More	One	More	One
Curriculum area							Subj	Subs	Subj	Subs	
Subj Subs											
English	91	8	94	6	91	8					
Mathematics		52	15	53	10	51	15				
Humanities & Social Sciences					28	7	33	7	27	7	
Economics & Business				24	19	31	26	26	23		
Biological & Other Sciences					40	2	42	*	30	2	
Physical Sciences			13	12	10	9	14	11			
Creative & Performing Arts					17	5	16	3	18	5	
Technical Studies			13	5	15	4	14	3			
Home Science		24	0	28	0	21	0				
Physical Education		18	*		21	0	13	*			
Languages 2		*	3	0	12	*					
Computer Studies			10	*	3	0	12	*			
Agriculture		1	0	1	0	*	0				
Other		5	1	4	*	5	2				

Notes: 1. Figures are rounded to nearest whole number  
2. \* denotes less than 0.5 per cent

It can be seen from Table 2 that taking English was nearly universal in each school location. At the time of the 1990 SCOPE survey English was the only compulsory Year 12 subject in Victorian government schools.

About two thirds of students were studying one or more mathematics subjects. There were few differences related to school location although students in remote schools were somewhat less likely to be studying more than one subject compared with their counterparts in other schools.

Students in remote schools were more likely than other students to be taking subjects in the areas of humanities and social sciences, economics and business, home science and physical

education. On the other hand they were less likely than their counterparts in other schools to be taking subjects in the physical sciences and computer studies. Students in rural and remote schools were more likely than students in metropolitan schools to be taking subjects in the area of biological and other sciences but less likely to be taking subjects in the area of languages.

Differences in curriculum participation in the three location classifications can also be discerned from the enrolment indices which are displayed graphically in Figure 1.

Key: Eng	English	TS	Technical Studies
Mat	Mathematics	HS	Home Science
HSS	Humanities & Social Sciences	PE	Physical Education
Eco	Economics & Business	Lng	Languages
BOS	Biological & Other Sciences	CS	Computer Studies
PS	Physical Sciences	Agr	Agriculture
CPA	Creative & Performing Arts		

Figure 1 Year 12 enrolment indices in different curriculum areas, rural, remote and metropolitan Victorian government schools, 1990

The enrolment indices show that students in remote schools are less likely than students in rural or metropolitan schools to be enrolled in the curriculum areas of mathematics, physical sciences, creative and performing arts and computer studies. Along with students in rural schools they are also less likely to be enrolled in the language curriculum area than are students in metropolitan schools.

On the other hand, students in remote schools are more likely than other students to be enrolled in the areas of humanities and social sciences, economics and business, home science and physical education. Along with students in rural schools they are also more likely to be enrolled in the area of biological and other sciences than are students in metropolitan schools. Compared with other students in both remote and metropolitan schools, students in rural schools were more likely to be enrolled in technical studies.

The differences between curriculum participation in the three locations of schooling may reflect a number of factors such as availability of qualified teachers, student (or parent) subject choice, and school curriculum philosophy. The SCOPE data provide

only the patterns of enrolments; they give no indication as to the reasons behind these patterns.

### Male and Female Participation in the Curriculum in Metropolitan, Rural and Remote Schools

In this section, and the ones that follow on other student characteristics, the basis of comparison across the locations of schools are the enrolment indices.

Table 3 provides for males and females separately the enrolment indices for the different curriculum areas for students in rural, remote and metropolitan schools respectively. To assist in the interpretation of these data, Figure 2 compares the overall enrolment indices of males and females in the fourteen curriculum areas.

Table 3 Male and female Year 12 enrolment indices in different curriculum areas, rural, remote and metropolitan Victorian government schools, 1990

Curriculum areas M F	Rural (nM=1956) (nF=2529)		Remote (nM=110) (nF=192)		Metropolitan (nM=5038) (nF=6625)			
	Enrolment		Enrolment		Enrolment		Enrolment	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
English	20.3	22.7	21.1	21.5	20.4	22.5		
Mathematics		20.4	13.2	18.5	12.9	19.7	13.5	
Humanities & Social Sciences					7.0	9.7	8.0	11.0 7.0 9.7
Economics & Business				13.3	14.1	16.4	19.5	16.2 16.3
Biological & Other Sciences					5.8	10.8	6.2	9.9 4.8 8.0
Physical Sciences		10.9	5.1	10.5	3.1	10.2	4.6	
Creative & Performing Arts					4.4	6.2	3.7	4.7 4.4 6.7
Technical Studies		8.5	3.1	6.2	4.1	6.3	3.0	
Home Science		1.2	7.5	2.8	7.4	1.3	6.4	
Physical Education		3.6	3.7	5.2	3.3	3.1	2.5	
Languages	0.2	0.4	0.0	0.7	1.8	3.1		
Computer Studies		2.8	1.5	0.4	0.7	3.1	1.9	
Agriculture		0.1	0.1	0.2	0.1	*	*	
Other		1.5	1.8	0.7	1.0	1.5	1.9	

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Notes:

1. Figures are rounded to first decimal place
2. \* denotes an index of less than 0.05
3. nM denotes sample size for males; nF denotes sample size for females

Key: Eng	English	TS	Technical Studies
Mat	Mathematics	HS	Home Science
HSS	Humanities & Social Sciences	PE	Physical Education
Education			
Eco	Economics & Business	Lng	Languages
BOS	Biological & Other Sciences	CS	Computer Studies
Studies			
PS	Physical Sciences	Agr	Agriculture
CPA	Creative & Performing Arts	Oth	Other

Figure 2 Male and female Year 12 enrolment indices in different curriculum areas, Victorian government schools, 1990

As can be seen from Figure 2 there are considerable differences between males and females in their enrolment patterns. For example, females have higher enrolment indices than males in the

curriculum areas of English, humanities and social sciences, biological and other sciences, creative and performing arts, home science and languages. On the other hand males have higher enrolment indices than females in the areas of mathematics, physical sciences, technical studies and computer studies.

In general, the differences that exist between male and female enrolment patterns continue to exist no matter the location of the school in which the student studies. In other words, gender differences in curriculum participation outweigh differences that are a result of location. However, there are some interesting relationships that show that the location of the school does mediate the effects of gender on curriculum participation.

In the English area, overall females (enrolment index of 22.5) are more likely to be enrolled than are males (enrolment index of 20.4). As can be seen from Table 3, however, this difference is greatly reduced for students in remote schools where the male and female enrolment indices are almost the same. A similar pattern exists in some other curriculum areas.

In the area of the creative and performing arts the overall female enrolment index (6.5) is larger than that for males (4.4). This is so for students in each of the three groups of schools

but the difference is less in remote schools. In technical studies, the enrolment index for males (7.0) is more than double that for females (3.1) but again this difference is least pronounced in the remote schools. A similar pattern exists for the areas of biological and other sciences and for home science. In biological and other sciences, overall females (enrolment index of 8.8) are more likely to be enrolled in this area than are males (enrolment index of 5.1). While the pattern is consistent across locations of schools the difference between male and female enrolments is smallest in the remote schools. With regard to home science, the enrolment index for females (6.7) is over four times that of males (1.3) but in remote schools the difference is not so great.

In two other areas, economics and business and the physical sciences, the pattern of enrolments across the three types of schools is again consistent with the overall gender differences but the differences are larger in remote schools. In economics and business the female enrolment index (15.8) is very similar to the male index (15.4); as shown in Table 3, however, in the remote schools the difference is greater. Similarly, the male enrolment index in the physical sciences (10.4) is over twice that of the female index (4.6) but in the remote schools the male index is over three times larger than the female index.

Two other areas, computer studies and physical education, deserve some comment. Overall males (enrolment index of 3.1) are more likely than females (enrolment index of 1.8) to be enrolled in computer studies. In remote schools, however, this is not the case for while the overall enrolment in computer studies in remote schools is low, females are more likely to be enrolled than males. In physical education, males (enrolment index of 3.2) are more likely to be enrolled than females (enrolment index of 2.8) but the difference is not great. In remote schools, however, the difference is greater, but in rural schools the enrolment indices for males and females are almost identical, with females having a slightly larger index.

## Participation in the Curriculum of Students from English-Speaking and Non-English Backgrounds in Metropolitan, Rural and Remote

### Schools

Table 4 provides for students of English-speaking and non-English-speaking background separately the enrolment indices for the different curriculum areas for students in rural/remote and



HSS	Humanities & Social Sciences	PE	Physical Education
Eco	Economics & Business	Lng	Languages
BOS	Biological & Other Sciences	CS	Computer Studies
PS	Physical Sciences	Agr	Agriculture
CPA	Creative & Performing Arts	Oth	Other

Figure 3 Year 12 enrolment indices for students who speak English and students who speak languages other than English in

the home, different curriculum areas, Victorian government schools, 1990

To assist in the interpretation of these data, Figure 3 compares the overall enrolment indices of students from English-speaking and non-English-speaking background in the fourteen curriculum areas.

As can be seen from Figure 3, students speaking English in the home have higher enrolment indices in the curriculum areas of English, humanities and social sciences, biological and other sciences, creative and performing arts, technical studies, home science and physical education. On the other hand, students who speak a language other than English in the home have higher enrolment indices in the areas of mathematics, the physical sciences, economics and business, computer studies and languages. Such patterns of enrolment, which reflect perhaps an emphasis on traditional and high status areas as well as a concern for language maintenance, have been reported in previous research reviews (Sturman 1985) and in the more recent national study of subject choice (Ainley, Jones and Navaratnam 1990).

In most curriculum areas, the differences that exist in curriculum participation between students who speak English at home and those that do not continue to exist no matter the location of the school in which the student studies. In other words, language differences in curriculum participation outweigh differences that are a result of location. However, there are some interesting relationships that show that the location of the school does mediate the effects of language spoken in the home on curriculum participation. The most notable effects of this mediation occur in the areas of physical sciences and technical studies and these patterns are displayed in Figure 4.

Key: PS (Rural)      Physical Sciences in Rural and Remote Schools

PS (Urban)	Physical Sciences in Metropolitan Schools
TS (Rural)	Technical Studies in Rural and Remote Schools
TS (Urban)	Technical Studies in Metropolitan Schools

Figure 4 Year 12 enrolment indices for students who speak English and students who speak languages other than English in the home, selected curriculum areas, Victorian government schools, 1990

As can be seen from Figures 3 and 4, while overall students who speak a language other than English in the home are more likely to be enrolled in the physical sciences (enrolment index of 9.1) than are those who speak English (enrolment index of 6.9), the pattern is reversed in rural/remote schools where English speakers have the higher enrolment index (7.6 compared with 5.8 for non-English speakers). Similarly, while overall students who speak English in the home are more likely to be enrolled in technical studies (enrolment index of 5.0) than are other students (enrolment index of 3.4), this trend is again reversed in rural/remote schools where students who do not speak English in the home have the highest enrolment index (6.4 compared with 5.5 for the English-speakers).

In the curriculum areas of mathematics and humanities and social sciences, while the overall pattern of participation did not change in the two categories of schools, the differences in participation between students who speak English at home and those who do not were far less marked (in fact they had almost

disappeared) in the rural/remote schools than in the metropolitan schools. On the other hand, in the area of economic and business, the overall differences between students who speak English at home and those who do not were far more marked in rural/remote schools than in metropolitan schools.

#### Participation in the Curriculum of Koori and non-Koori Students in Metropolitan, Rural and Remote Schools

Table 5 provides, for Koori and non-Koori students separately, the enrolment indices for the different curriculum areas for students in rural/remote and metropolitan schools respectively.

Table 5 Year 12 enrolment indices for Koori and non-Koori students in different curriculum areas, rural/remote and metropolitan Victorian government schools, 1990

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Remote/Remote Metropolitan  
 (nNK=4870) (nNK=11905)  
 (nK=36) (nK=54)

Curriculum areas	Enrolment Index		Enrolment Index	
	Non-Koori	Koori	Non-Koori	Koori
English	21.6	21.8	21.6	20.0
Mathematics	16.2	15.6	16.3	15.4
Humanities & Social Sciences	8.6	9.5	8.5	7.7
Economics & Business	14.0	16.8	16.2	12.3
Biological & Other Sciences	8.6	10.1	6.6	6.3
Physical Sciences	7.5	3.4	7.1	6.7
Creative & Performing Arts	5.3	3.9	5.7	8.4
Technical Studies	5.5	6.1	4.4	8.1
Home Science	4.8	6.1	4.1	2.8
Physical Education	3.8	3.4	2.7	2.8
Languages	0.3	0.6	2.6	1.8
Computer Studies	2.0	0.6	2.4	2.8
Agriculture	0.1	0.6	*	0.4
Other	1.6	1.7	1.8	4.6

- Notes:
1. Figures are rounded to first decimal place
  2. \* denotes an index of less than 0.05
  3. nNK denotes sample size for non-Kooris; nK denotes sample size for Kooris

For the analyses presented in this chapter, rural and remote schools have again been grouped together because there were only five Koori students in remote schools and only 31 in rural schools. The combined total of 36 Koori students in rural and remote schools and 54 Koori students in metropolitan schools is small and some caution is required in extrapolating the findings from such a sample.<sup>5</sup>

Key: Eng	English	TS	Technical Studies
Mat	Mathematics	HS	Home Science
HSS	Humanities & Social Sciences	PE	Physical Education
Eco	Economics & Business	Lng	Languages
BOS	Biological & Other Sciences	CS	Computer Studies
PS	Physical Sciences	Agr	Agriculture
CPA	Creative & Performing Arts	Oth	Other

Figure 5 Year 12 enrolment indices for Koori and non-Koori students, different curriculum areas, Victorian government schools, 1990

To assist in the interpretation of the data in Table 5, Figure 5 compares the overall enrolment indices of Koori and non-Koori students in the fourteen curriculum areas.

As can be seen from Figure 5, the differences between the two groups of students in their curriculum participation were not great. Compared with non-Koori students, Kooris have higher enrolment indices in the curriculum areas of biological and other sciences, creative and performing arts, technical studies, agriculture and the "other" curriculum area. On the other hand, non-Koori students have higher enrolment indices in the areas of English, mathematics, the physical sciences, economics and business and computer studies.

- Key: HSS (R) Humanities and Social Sciences in Rural and Remote Schools  
 HSS (U) Humanities and Social Sciences in Metropolitan Schools  
 EB (R) Economics and Business in Rural and Remote Schools  
 EB (U) Economics and Business in Metropolitan Schools  
 CPA (R) Creative and Performing Arts in Rural and Remote Schools  
 CPA (U) Creative and Performing Arts in Metropolitan Schools  
 HS (R) Home Science in Rural and Remote Schools  
 HS (U) Home Science in Metropolitan Schools  
 CS (R) Computer Studies in Rural and Remote Schools  
 CS (U) Computer Studies in Metropolitan Schools

Figure 6 Year 12 enrolment indices for Koori and non-Koori students, selected curriculum areas, Victorian government schools, 1990

Although overall the differences between participation in the curriculum of Koori and non-Koori students were not great the pattern was not particularly consistent across the two categories of schools. This may in part reflect the small numbers of Koori students in the State. Figure 6 displays the most notable of these inconsistencies.

As can be seen from Figures 5 and 6, while overall Koori students are more likely to be enrolled in creative and performing arts

(enrolment index of 6.5) than are non-Kooris (enrolment index of 5.6), the pattern is reversed in rural/remote schools where non-Koori students have the higher enrolment index (5.3 compared with 3.9 for Kooris). Similarly, while overall non-Koori students are more likely to be enrolled in humanities and social sciences, economics and business, and home science (enrolment indices of 8.5, 15.6, and 4.3 respectively) than are Koori students (enrolment indices of 8.2, 14.1, and 4.0 respectively), this trend is again reversed in rural/remote schools where Koori students have higher enrolment indices than non-Koori students. While not shown in Figure 6, this is also the case in the areas of English and languages. With regard to computer studies, overall non-Kooris have a higher enrolment index (2.4) than Kooris (1.9) but this is not the case in urban schools.

Although again not shown in Figure 6, in the curriculum area of biology and other sciences, while overall Kooris have a higher enrolment index than non-Koori students this is not the case in metropolitan schools. In the physical sciences, the difference that exists between Koori and non-Koori participation is far less in metropolitan schools than in rural/remote schools.

## Conclusion

When the percentage of students taking one or more subjects within different curriculum areas was examined, it was found that taking English was nearly universal in each school location and there were few differences related to the study of mathematics from one school location to another, although students in remote schools were somewhat less likely to be studying more than one subject compared with their counterparts in other schools.

Students in remote schools were more likely than other students to be taking subjects in the areas of humanities and social sciences, economics and business, home science and physical education. On the other hand they were less likely than their counterparts in other schools to be taking subjects in the physical sciences and computer studies. Students in rural and remote schools were more likely than students in metropolitan schools to be taking subjects in the area of biological and other sciences but less likely to be taking subjects in the area of languages.

Examination of the enrolment indices revealed that students in remote schools were less likely than students in rural or metropolitan schools to be enrolled in the curriculum areas of mathematics, physical sciences, creative and performing arts and computer studies. Along with students in rural schools they were

also less likely to be enrolled in the language curriculum area than were students in metropolitan schools.

On the other hand, students in remote schools were more likely than other students to be enrolled in the areas of humanities and social sciences, economics and business, home science and physical education. Along with students in rural schools they were also more likely to be enrolled in the area of biological and other sciences than were students in metropolitan schools. Compared with other students in both remote and metropolitan schools, students in rural schools were more likely to be enrolled in technical studies.

Later sections of this paper examined the extent to which school location mediated the patterns of curriculum participation that exist for different categories of students based on their social and personal background. With regard to gender and language status, in the main it was concluded that the greatest differences in participation were a result of that personal and social background and not a result of school location. However, as reported in those chapters school location did have some mediating effects of enrolment in different curriculum areas, in particular for students of different Koori status.

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1 The author would like to express his appreciation to the Victorian Department of School Education for releasing the data for this report.

2 A fuller discussion of the rationale for the classification system is presented in the report on rural, remote and metropolitan zones classification prepared by the Rural and Provincial Policy Unit of the Department of Primary Industries and Energy (DPIE 1991).

3 No postcode information was available for 7 schools in the sample in which there were 463 students who responded to the survey.

4 Information on the total number of students who do not speak English in the home is not available to determine to what extent the sample reflects the total population.

5 However, in interpreting these data it is the total number of Koori students in the population that is important. If the SCOPE survey included all Koori students then information on their curriculum participation would be totally accurate despite the small numbers involved. The 1990 SCOPE survey identified 97 Year 12 Koori students in government schools (information on regional location and accurate information on subject choice was available for only 80 of these students). The Victorian Department of School Education (1992) records the existence of only 60 Koori students. The discrepancy most probably lies in the definition of Koori which enables students to identify themselves as being a Koori or not. Despite this discrepancy, the sample of Koori students from the SCOPE survey would appear to cover most Koori students in the State.