



VICTORIAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH

Mr Stephen Gniel
Chief Executive Officer
Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority
Level 7, 2 Lonsdale Street
Melbourne, 3000

27 August 2021

Dear Mr Gniel,

I am writing in my capacity as President of the Victorian Association for the Teaching of English (VATE) to pass on some feedback from our members. Teachers of VCE English, VCE English Language, and VCE Literature have been active on VATE's online networks, voicing their concerns for themselves and their students in managing the coursework under continued lockdowns. As a Year 12 English and Literature teacher myself, I would like to pass on some feedback from one of my students who recently emailed me:

"I'm doing ok, just really trying to make an effort to stay positive at the moment. The whole cohort seems to be EXTREMELY unmotivated at the moment which is understandable, but unfortunately tends to rub off on everyone else! We are all just really upset and angry at VCAA at the moment because it seems like they are doing nothing to help us, well at least in comparison to last year. I understand that my friends and I weren't in lockdown for as long as them, but we have had just as unfair of a Year 12 (and missed out on a whole Year 11 to prepare us for Year 12) and I feel like that should be acknowledged. Removing some key knowledge from the study design would be a HUGE help and less pressure for us come exam time, but I highly doubt they will do it! Just super disappointing and getting a lot of us down, as we feel that they don't really care in a way."

In addition, please note some of the feedback from our members:

- Basically I'm really concerned about the students getting through everything. The uncertainty is terrible for them.
- I have found it exceedingly challenging to get through content this year. Not sure how to finish teaching the course and run the assessment.
- Honestly if it weren't for these networks I would be a sorry mess. So thank you for all the support throughout the year.
- I am writing in what feels like a period of desperation – I am teaching close analysis remotely and I am in need of ideas. My Year 12 students are starting to really struggle mentally and emotionally and I am reluctant to keep pushing them to 'practise' analysis and participate in discussion conferences when their work output is really low.
- I agree the Year 12s are feeling the challenge of engaging online.
- I feel terrible because I can't slow down – VCAA is stubbornly silent. I feel like the hard task master that is not taking in account the students' anxiety, exhaustion and mental wellbeing ... parents are emailing ... we are placed in a challenging position.



VICTORIAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH

With this in mind, I write to ask for insight into discussions the VCAA may have had/ be having as to consideration of remaining course work/ assessment/ exams for this year's cohort. The membership and broader community would be grateful to hear from the VCAA at this point.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Emily Frawley".

Dr Emily Frawley
VATE President

CC: Dr Annelise Balsamo, English Curriculum Manager, VCAA