

VA TE Victorian Association for the Teaching of English

1 September 2026

Andrew Smith
Chief Executive Officer
Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority
Level 7, 200 Victoria Parade
East Melbourne VIC 3002

Dear Andrew,

I am writing to you in my capacity as the Victorian Association for the Teaching of English (VATE) President regarding the recently announced organisational and curriculum restructuring within the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA).

Our understanding is that subject English will be located within a larger 'English and Languages Unit,' which combines subject English with the 48 Languages Other Than English taught in schools. We further understand that the existing dedicated subject English Curriculum Manager position will be discontinued and replaced by an 'English and Languages Curriculum Manager'. We note that although the 'English and Languages Unit' includes a Principal Curriculum Advisor (at a VPS 6) and four Senior Curriculum Advisors (at a VPS 5), there is no role that is specifically assigned to English in this model.

VATE acknowledges the need for public organisations to review structures and respond to changing circumstances. However, the proposed changes raise significant questions about the future of discipline-specific expertise, curriculum leadership, stakeholder engagement and public accountability. Given the centrality of subject English within Victorian schooling and the importance of English skills to educational success, we believe these matters warrant clarification and public discussion.

For many years, the English Curriculum Managers have served as highly valued disciplinary experts who have provided authoritative guidance to schools, teachers, universities, professional associations and the public. VATE has worked closely with the various incumbents, all of whom have disciplinary expertise and managed the complexities of this important role. The role of English Curriculum Manager provides a visible point of contact, ensured continuity of expertise during curriculum reform, and have played a critical role in the interpretation and implementation of curriculum and assessment policy.

It is not clear to us how these functions will be sustained under the proposed arrangements. In particular we are concerned by what appears to be a move away from identifiable subject English discipline leadership and deep curriculum expertise toward a broader administrative management position. While administrative efficiencies may be a legitimate objective, curriculum quality ultimately depends upon specialist knowledge. The teaching of subject English, like the teaching of mathematics, sciences and other disciplines, requires

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leaders whose expertise is grounded in the field itself and who can engage confidently with the complex educational issues arising within that domain.

We are especially concerned by the proposal to locate subject English within a broader 'English and Languages Unit'. As you are aware, it is the largest area of the curriculum and requires the most specialised secondary teachers. It is also the largest and most visible study within the VCE and the only study undertaken by every student seeking completion of the certificate. Subject English occupies a distinctive position in relation to language, literature and literacy, curriculum access and educational equity. The rationale for subsuming subject English within a larger 'English and Languages Unit' (when English itself is a language) is therefore unclear.

We also seek clarification on the following matters:

1. How will discipline-specific expertise in English be maintained following the removal of the Curriculum Manager position?
2. Who from the VCAA will provide authoritative curriculum leadership and advice for English teachers, schools, professional associations and tertiary stakeholders?
3. What is the rationale for placing subject English within a broader 'English and Languages Unit', and how will the distinct needs and responsibilities of English be recognised within that structure?
4. We understand that Mathematics will continue to operate through a dedicated organisational unit. If so, why has Mathematics retained separate disciplinary recognition while English, as a compulsory study and the largest VCE subject, has not been afforded equivalent status?
5. How was this restructuring communicated, and what consultation processes informed the decision?
6. What measures will be put in place to ensure continuity of expertise and institutional knowledge following the departure of experienced curriculum leaders?
7. Given that the combined VCE English studies are the largest and only compulsory VCE subject, with approximately 50,000 students sitting the VCE Englishes examinations each year, what assessment has been made of the risks associated with removing dedicated curriculum leadership in this area?
8. Subject English is one of the most publicly scrutinised aspects of Victorian schooling. When issues arise relating to examinations, assessment, curriculum implementation or text selection, particularly during the VCE examination period, they frequently attract significant media, community and political attention. What arrangements will ensure clear accountability, expert leadership and effective stakeholder communication when such issues occur?

VATE is concerned that having subject English subsumed in a 'English and Languages Unit' weakens the visible standing of English. Subject English teachers need confidence that the discipline itself is valued. [Recent research of the VATE membership](#) showed that subject English teachers whose schools restricted them enacting their discipline identity were much more likely to leave the profession.

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With the protracted crisis of teacher shortages, the reduction of visible, discipline-specific curriculum leadership sends a troubling signal to the profession. It is important that the VCAA prioritises subject identity and urgently focuses on supporting teacher identity and identity work as a strategy to improve teacher retention, reduce teacher attrition and sustain individual subject English teachers and the profession as a whole.

VATE urges the VCAA to provide a clear account of how English expertise will be sustained, supported and made accessible under the proposed arrangements.

We would welcome the opportunity to meet with VCAA representatives to discuss the restructure and its implications for English education in Victoria.

With regards,



Professor Joanne O'Mara

Parr, G., Hicks, D., McGraw, A., & O'Mara, J. (2026). The Importance of Professional Identity in the Sustainability of the Secondary English Teaching Profession. *Changing English*, 33(3), 288–306. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1358684X.2025.2579796>