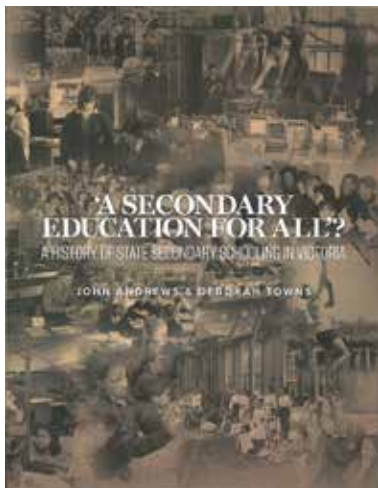


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## ‘A Secondary Education for All’? A History of State Secondary Schooling in Victoria

By John Andrews and Deborah Towns

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394 pages

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*‘A Secondary Education For All’? A History of State Secondary Schooling in Victoria* sets out to chronicle the rich and varied aspects of schooling, an almost impossible task recognised by the authors themselves in the introduction when they describe the book as ‘far ranging but not comprehensive.’

The aim of the book is to endeavour to show how governments and teachers have worked to ‘cater for all’ even in the face of declining financial resources and numerous challenges. As many of us have spent a great portion of our lives in schools, either as pupils, teachers or engaged in other roles, it will come as no surprise that to discuss such a topic is going to be lengthy.

I began by trying to read this book from cover to cover and quickly realised that this was not going to be enjoyable. Indeed, I do not believe that this is the purpose of the book or the correct way to approach it. This is a reference book, and I found it a delightful task to skip through and find areas of personal interest. There are plenty of these, ranging from Frank Tate’s (Director of the Victorian Department of Education, 1902) ‘new education,’ which recognised that intellectual education must go hand-in-hand with manual education, the impact of the war years, a history of school uniforms, ever-changing building designs to cater

for new methodologies, and the ever-changing curriculum. In addition, scattered throughout the text are vignettes featuring specific school histories and famous alumni.

As the title suggests, this book tries to determine to what extent the provision of education for all in Victorian government schools has been achieved. The book clearly chronicles attempts to provide a meaningful curriculum, state-of-the-art facilities, suitably qualified teachers and resources to students of varying abilities, interests and needs.

Has education for all been achieved? The authors do not make a definitive answer but cleverly acknowledge that while this goal is at the forefront of decision-making it will become closer to realisation.

The book includes a variety of pictures scattered throughout that are of variable quality and all black-and-white. Although interesting, they could have been better placed next to the relevant text.

I believe this book will have great appeal to those who are researching a specific aspect of Victorian government schooling, are curious about their own school experience or intend to document their own school’s history. The nifty compendium that accompanies the larger text is a great starting point for those wishing to achieve this.