

## Australian Curriculum Review: Australian Council of State School Organisations Submission

The *Australian Council of State School Organisations (ACSSO)* is pleased to provide a submission to the Review of the Australian Curriculum. As the recognised peak voice for parents in government schools we have already contributed significantly to discussions surrounding the development and implementation of the curriculum.

ACSSO believes that ongoing evaluation and monitoring of curriculum at the appropriate times is essential; this would ensure that curriculum remains current and meets the needs of the students it serves.

We also believe that there should always be educational reasons for a curriculum review and we recognise the need for a national curriculum which meets students' needs, drives education quality and ensures parents' expectations for their children's future are achieved.

Reviewing the Australian Curriculum demands serious consideration of what is required to equip young people for their future. Five year olds who start school in Australia today enter their adult lives just at the time key Asian nations will become the world's top economies. Our children's future will be shaped by these geopolitics and shifting patterns of global mobility, trade, technology and youth cultures.

### **WHO ARE WE?**

The Australian Council of State School Organisations (ACSSO) is the peak national organisation representing the interests of the parents, families and school communities of more than two million children attending government schools throughout Australia.

Our functions are increasingly diverse and extensive, and include to:

- conduct, commission and publish research on educational issues
- lead and facilitate public debate and discussion to establish the strategic directions and priorities for education
- provide an interactive information service to government and to schools and their communities
- ensure that community needs and priorities are reflected in education decision making processes
- develop and manage a range of initiatives and community projects to improve the effective involvement of parents and families in student learning and development.

### **DEVELOPMENT OF THE CURRICULUM**

ACSSO has full confidence in the processes ACARA has enacted in developing the curriculum. ACSSO, its affiliates and their member parent organisations in individual schools have been invited to be involved in all of the stages including commenting on Shape papers and actual curriculum in the writing and consultation phases. We have been extremely pleased with ACARA's accommodating and consultative nature in ensuring that the parent voice is included, acknowledged and valued throughout the processes

We believe the Australian Curriculum has gone through a rigorous national process which was inclusive and open to those who wished to participate. The writers and developers were experts in their key areas and the curriculum's development was spread over a 2-3 year period.

In addition to this rigorous process it must also be noted that each curriculum area has then been approved by all state and territory ministers.

What is significant about ACARA's approach is that there is an ongoing opportunity to provide online feedback on the curriculum and resources. This demonstrates a commitment to continual renewal and improvement

Whilst we recognise that there are many stakeholders involved in the development of the curriculum and that consultation is a difficult exercise, we consider that as parents and community members our views have been listened to and, as a result, a reasoned and positive response was communicated from ACARA.

ACSSO is positive about the Australian Curriculum in its current format. We are of the belief that the curriculum is well balanced, relatively independent and a rigorous discipline-based 21st-century curriculum.

Of significance to ACSSO is that the curriculum is greatly enhanced by ACARA's cross-curriculum priorities and general capabilities features within the curriculum.

We do not believe there is a need for any fundamental changes to the architecture of the curriculum that is still in the early stages of implementation. From the beginning of the ACARA process, we participated in the development of the curriculum as advisors and believe the writers and consultants were well briefed and worked rigorously to get the best that they could,

ACSSO believes that the Australian curriculum, as a high quality curriculum, has been, and will continue to be, an important catalyst for the innovation of curriculum, teaching and learning in Australian schools. It is our understanding that the Australian Curriculum has been well received by teachers and that there is enthusiasm to teach this curriculum. . Staff have undertaken considerable professional learning and have developed units of work based on the new curriculum. In addition a considerable body of excellent professional resources has been developed.

The review has created uncertainty at the start of the New Year for practitioners and parents.

As a result of the involvement of ourselves and our affiliates with ACARA's processes over an extended period of time, we see the curriculum as one of many strengths and support its continued implementation without significant changes being made to the content and structure of the curriculum at this point of time.