



Submission to
the Australian Curriculum Review - Consultation

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Please indicate your name if an individual, or your organisation name if you are responding on behalf of an organisation

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The Australian Council of State School Organisations is a peak community organisation and the
One voice for every child in public education

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No

AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL OF STATE SCHOOL ORGANISATIONS
SUBMISSION TO THE
AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM REVIEW CONSULTATION

Thank you for the opportunity to give feedback on the review of the Australian Curriculum. The cycle of review every 6 years is extremely relevant to ensure we stay abreast with the changes and contexts that is the world our young people live in and will live in.

We applaud ACARA for this rigorous process which was inclusive and open to those who wished to participate with a rather extensive consultation. This demonstrates a commitment to continual renewal and improvement and more poignantly, equity and inclusion of all stakeholders.

In our response we note that it is not our expertise to evaluate curriculum to the extent of educators. We offer firstly what families have expressed as their desired outcomes for their children and secondly, what ACSSO believes are notable changes that support our policy.

ACSSO supports the belief that Australia is a multicultural and democratic society in which every individual has the right to achieve personal fulfillment while respecting the rights of others and developing cooperative relationships essential to living in society. We acknowledge that education is integral to both the development of the individual and the development of society; it both reflects and exercises an influence on the values, attitudes, and practices of society.

A high-quality education, therefore, is in the interests of Australia, as a whole and is the right of every individual. Education is a lifelong process which neither begins nor ends with formal schooling or formal education, although the role of the school is crucial in the development of individuals, and through them society.

Curriculum development therefore needs to have a broad scope because it is not only about the school, the learners, and the teachers. It is also about the development of a just society by ensuring that all Australians acquire skills and understanding to empower them to actively participate in and shape the society in which they live.

ACSSO believes that curriculum is the totality of learning activities students engage in through schooling. The content of courses, staffing policy, facilities, and resources, teaching, and learning styles, family engagement, school organisation and assessment and reporting procedures impact on student learning and so are a necessary part of curriculum considerations.

ACSSO strongly believes that the school curriculum should involve students in activities which:

- encourage intellectual independence
- investigate the three major fields of human enquiry: natural science, social science, and aesthetic studies
- enable the mastery of communication skills, including both literacy and numeracy
- facilitate the development of creative and physical skills
- provide an increased understanding of the environment

- contribute to personal and social development
- develop capacities for decision making and participation in decision making activities
- encourage active commitment to others.

Lifelong continuing education is necessary for the fullest development of people. Alternative types of education must be provided for people to choose what suits their needs and through which they can progress in stages which suit them.

ACSSO notes that there have been considerable conversations and commentary from the P-6 principals and teachers that the Primary curriculum was “cluttered” and there was too much to be covered in those years. That did also cause concern for families, and their experiences during the “learning from home” period confirmed this.

We have come to understand the benefit and purpose of an Australian Curriculum allows a common practice across the country. It should ensure all students emerge into life beyond school with a standard of literacy and numeracy to assist them to function, but more importantly the capability to apply the knowledge they have, to whatever their chosen path beyond school takes. The changes of refining and sometimes a little redefining as well as trimming the content, will make it much easier to be transferrable from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. It should also support the student as they exit secondary education.

GENERAL COMMENTS

Families we have spoken to have commented that there is far too much crammed into each subject, confirming the principals’ comments. Rather they would prefer an opportunity to gain deeper knowledge of aspects that are relevant and contextual and relate to their community. We want them to know how to apply their knowledge post school. Parents want to see students confident in concepts before moving forward.

Families also have commented that the curriculum needs to have the ability to be flexible, linked to the world students live in and the workplace applications and practices they will inherit.

Families want the content to be contemporary, relevant to today’s world and delivered in a variety of ways. They want “real life” applications. Some support was evident for “project-based learning” as opposed to subjects delivered in silos. Cross curriculum priorities can address that to some extent.

We know that knowledge is an everchanging commodity; parents want their child to develop at school, in partnership with families, the knowledge, skills, understanding and capabilities to be lifelong learners and facilitate their own acquisition of knowledge that is pertinent to their pursuits. Embedded in the curriculum needs to be the framework that allows students to develop the ability to critically think; communicate effectively and problem solve.

One key comment, which is possibly harkening back to the early NAPLAN days but relevant to the current review, is that families do not want assessment requirements to drive the delivery of curriculum, rather it be student led and building on their strengths.

CROSS CURRICULUM PRIORITIES

We applaud the integration of both the Cross-Curriculum Priorities and the General Capabilities into the curriculum. The cross-curriculum priorities bring context and authenticity to many of the subject areas. We were aware that they were never an add-on and it's good to see that point reiterated. The work in providing and linking resources for teachers will be immense. It's great to see that the new website will support that. Integrating the Cross-Curriculum priorities particularly if they make the lessons more relevant and accessible can only further enhance the learning.

The work produced by ACARA on the content elaborations support the work of teachers and assist in the inclusion of the cross-curriculum priorities. Revision of these illustrations with the specific groups such as the AEF and the CSRIO have added to the level of authenticity, making content relevant and contemporary.

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER HISTORIES AND CULTURE

ACSSO fully supports the inclusion of First Nations' histories and cultures, and for greater truth-telling in the Australian Curriculum. We are particularly supportive of the additions to Year 7 History.

Our young people, in having access to the opportunity to learn about the unique cultures of this land, develop a greater appreciation and understanding of our country, allowing students to engage in reconciliation. It is imperative that what students learn at school is reflective of their world.

This also celebrates and is inclusive of our young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, which will indeed provide the foundation for improving their outcomes.

ASIA AND AUSTRALIA'S ENGAGEMENT WITH ASIA

Asia is home to half the world's population. As the world becomes globalized, we need to understand people outside of Australia and similar Anglo-Saxon related countries. Studying the culturally and historically diverse areas of Asia will provide important opportunities for students to discover new global perspectives, recognising that the economic transformations in Asia have reshaped our global economic and political environment.

The importance of Australia's engagement with Asia remains overwhelmingly convincing. It is ACSSO's understanding that within the next twenty years, five of the top ten world economies will be in Asia. And, even in today's COVID world, Asia remains the most vibrant and dynamic region in the world in the face of an ageing and stagnating Europe and North America.

So, it is important to remember that Asian Studies is not just Asian languages. Asia is no longer out there and Australia here. Prior to COVID we have had record numbers of Australians travelling to Asia as a regular matter of course.

Aside from gaining knowledge about Asia, the focus of Asian Studies needs to and does address many of the larger questions that intersect with both academic studies and personal experiences. The study of cultures beyond your home also provides a fresh perspective into your own heritage.

Knowledge and understanding of Asia and Australia's relationship with Asia make an important contribution to being good neighbours and responsible global citizens; and to a harmonious, creative, and prosperous Australia.

SUSTAINABILITY

As a nation we have come to understand that many of the Earth's resources are finite and that the unrestrained use of these resources will ultimately have a negative impact on our society. Given this understanding it is imperative that the curriculum includes a concept of sustainable practice in the younger generations. It is the generations that will be inheriting many of the current issues that have resulted from past unsustainable practices.

How we use resources underpins all aspects of our society and examples of sustainable practice can be integrated through most, if not all areas of the curriculum, While HASS and Science lend themselves easily to the inclusion of sustainability, the use of data in mathematics and the communication of information through debating or persuasive text; factual accounts etc in literacy are also significant in reinforcing this concept. Equally important is the use of the Arts allowing students to express their own thoughts and feelings when working their way through these complex and often confronting issues.

GENERAL CAPABILITIES

We understand that not all general capabilities are taught in every learning area. We understand they are only included in learning area content where they can be developed in *authentic and meaningful ways*. ACSSO strongly supports this and acknowledges and supports the Education goals for Young Australians outlined in The Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration which has identified essential skills for twenty-first century learners – in literacy, numeracy, information, and communication technology (ICT), thinking, creativity, teamwork, and communication.

The declaration supports the need for the general capabilities when it describes young Australians who can manage their own wellbeing, relate well to others, make informed decisions about their lives, become citizens who behave with ethical integrity, relate to, and communicate across cultures, work for the common good and act with responsibility at local, regional, and global levels.

Families gave great support for the integration of ICT into curriculum rather than a stand-alone where young people are sat in computer rooms. They would like to see a greater understanding that when we are talking about ICT, we are not just referring to computers.

ACSSO is pleased to become aware of the strengthening of the elaborations in all areas which gives teachers more detailed illustrations of content and supports the integration of both the general capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities. This adds to the *authenticity* of content and *connection* to the student's world.

NEW CURRICULUM WEBSITE

In relation to the New Curriculum Website, ACSSO makes the following observations: -

- Provides a much easier guide for teachers to navigate – great links to integrating general capabilities and cross curriculum priorities which also provides the classroom teacher with a level of confidence and an ability to ensure they have included them (something about accountability)
- For parents it is still in language that may not be accessible to all and possibly not at all accessible to someone for whom English is not their first language or dialect.
- Totally commend that it be an inclusive place for all school community but unsure as to whether it is accessible to all families

ARTS CURRICULUM

The Humanities and the Arts are central to all human cultures throughout time. It is ACSSO's position that learning through and about the Arts deepens the experience of studying while at school as well as preparing students for life after school. The Arts encourage self-expression, creativity and builds belief, as well as a sense of individual identity.

We were pleased to hear that the review has changed with a view to give teachers confidence in the teaching of Arts. This is specifically relevant in the F-6 area where you find that the delivery of the Arts often relies on the confidence and capabilities of the individual teacher.

Arts is a KLA that is often overlooked in the F-6 area due to teachers not being confident. Some schools where there are specialists employed create an equity issue for those that cannot. The support offered through the revision of the syllabus will assist in alleviating this.

We are extremely pleased to see the inclusion of learning through play at the Foundation level. This allows a continuum from early childhood but is also seen as the most effective pedagogy for that age group.

It is welcoming to see the inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content to also ensure that there is connection and relevance as well as an opportunity to address the cross-curriculum priority.

ACSSO sees music and art are an ideal learning area for intercultural understanding.

HISTORY

The movement of some content (*impact of bushfires and floods on the environment and community and regulations on how laws are enforced*) from Years 5-6 to allow for better alignment to subjects taught in Year 7 assists not only in aligning with subjects in Year 7, but allows for a better transition and connection to secondary education. As this is a time where young people often disconnect, particularly with "newer" subject areas, it is good to see some familiarity of content for them to draw on which could increase their confidence and self-esteem.

We are also pleased to see the introduction of *Deep Time History of Australia* – and that it is one of the two topics students are expected to learn. This focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories is welcomed by ACSSO. Firstly, it builds knowledge, understanding and empathy in those non-Indigenous students and secondly assists in making the curriculum relevant to our indigenous students, connects them to culture and builds their feeling of self-worth.

CIVICS AND CITIZENSHIP

There is no denying that Australia is a Western, liberal democracy with Christian roots but in the 21st century, Australia has become a multi-denominational society and it is important to not defend one religion over another (or none) but rather we should be defending and supporting freedom, equality, and the rule of law.

We recognise that Australia is both a secular nation and a multi-faith society, and over the last 100 years has also become a cosmopolitan society. Australia's *current* cultural heritage needs to represent the value systems, beliefs, traditions, and lifestyles that recognise this diversity. Every Australian should strive to be a citizen that is actively involved in our governance. ACSSO believes that civics and citizenship education should not be limited to participation in politics and society, it should also encompass participation in classrooms, neighbourhoods, groups, and organisations. In

civics and citizenship, students should learn to contribute to public processes and discussions of real issues. Students should also learn civic practices such as voting, volunteering, jury service, and joining with others to improve society. It enables students not only to study how others participate, but also to practice participating and taking informed action themselves.

We thank ACARA for the opportunities it continues to give us to work with them in shaping education for our young people. We look forward to seeing the review outcomes and the exciting advancements in the Australian Curriculum that will support all young Australians in their lifelong education journey.