



HTAA Submission for the Review of the Australian Curriculum

Whilst the History Teachers' Association of Australia agrees that a successful curriculum needs to be dynamic and reviewed in a timely fashion, our members question the timing of the current review of the Australian Curriculum. The existing curriculum has not been fully implemented in states and territories and any new curriculum needs time for teachers and students to build their skills. Teachers have invested significant time into developing resources and uncertainty regarding possible changes is unsettling for education professionals.

Key concerns have been raised by our members about the possibility of adding more curriculum or removing the opportunity to choose depth studies beyond the mandated unit of World War I and World War II. The existing depth studies provide all students with the opportunity to understand the emergence of Western Civilisation and democratic principles as well as Australia's rich history. The potential for the introduction of more mandatory units would either reduce choice, or add content that would lead to overcrowding of the already expansive curriculum.

HTAA also is concerned that statements made prior to the announcement of the review regarding a perceived left wing bias to the History curriculum will cloud the transparency of the review. Any suggestion that the curriculum has been skewed towards one political perspective is easily discredited when an independent party reviews the process of consultation that occurred in the development of the curriculum. The curriculum was written by a team of experienced History teachers and reviewed by a range of classroom teachers and stakeholders.

Minister Pyne's references in press releases announcing the review that Australia's performance in international testing necessitates such a review also skews the focus of schools to external testing which HTAA believes will be detrimental to student learning.

Recommendations

- Subject associations be involved directly in the review process on the basis that they are subject specialists and represent the teachers who are delivering the Australian Curriculum
- No changes be introduced at this time to allow time for teachers in each state/territory to complete the implementation cycle in terms of teaching, assessing and reporting using the current Australian Curriculum documentation
- If changes are proposed then teachers need to be consulted and any changes to content need not be compulsory
- The Federal Government continue to provide funding for the professional learning of teachers and support links between AITSL and professional teaching associations

- The federal government continue to support the development of resources for the Australian Curriculum utilising the expertise of professional teaching associations in the development of these resources

HTAA welcomes the opportunity to discuss the Australian Curriculum: History with Professor Ken Wiltshire AO and Dr Kevin Donnelly in order that our extensive expertise in History curriculum, teaching and learning can be incorporated into the review process.

Specific comments on the terms of reference:

1. “Robustness, independence and balance of the development of the Australian Curriculum”

HTAA has been involved in the development of the Australian Curriculum: History since its inception with the *Australian Curriculum Shaping Paper* through direct consultation and providing feedback. Furthermore a significant number of the writers of the curriculum are members of their respective HTA’s. HTAA believes that the development of the History curriculum has been done with a high degree of independence and balance.

- 1.1 Highly experienced and knowledgeable practicing teachers were directly involved throughout the curriculum development process. This includes the original “critical friends” who reviewed the initial Shape Paper, Advisory Panel members, writers of the P-10 and Senior Secondary curriculum, teachers participating in the trial of the P-10 across states and territories and the generation of work samples
- 1.2 The involvement of teacher representatives at meetings held by ACARA (through an invitation by national associations such as HTAA as well as state and territory curriculum authority bodies) was crucial in ensuring a viable curriculum was developed
- 1.3 Wide representation and feedback from stakeholders including teachers, principals, governments, state and territory curriculum authorities, professional education associations and parents
- 1.4 HTAA provided feedback on drafts and editions through formal submissions as well as members being involved in writing, trialling and reviewing
- 1.5 HTAA has been vocal on providing feedback on ACARA’s process throughout the development of both the P-10 and Senior History courses

Consultation on the Australian Curriculum was lengthy and has resulted in numerous drafts and modifications to create a dynamic, engaging, flexible and balanced curriculum.

2. “Robustness, independence and balance of the content of the Australian Curriculum”

As stated previously, HTAA considers statements made regarding a perceived left wing bias within the History curriculum have the potential to cloud the review process and, as such, wish to go on the record of highlighting that the content within the History curriculum is robust and balanced.

The organisation and structure of the Australian Curriculum: History aims to avoid an ad hoc teaching of History and avoid repetition of content. Research conducted in Australia and other countries has shown that repetition and an ad hoc approach to teaching contributes to students’ lack of engagement with History, especially the national history of a country. As such, within the existing Australian Curriculum document:

- 2.1 The organisation of historical content and skills reflects the developmental stages of students. The P-2 curriculum focuses on learning through using “their interest in people and how things work to make sense of their world”. The 3 – 6 curriculum builds on students growing awareness of the wider community, including the heritage of the local and national community. The 7 – 10 curriculum has been developed using the framework of World History to enable students to place Australia’s development and achievements in the context of histories from around the world that reflect historical trends.
- 2.2 Students are formally introduced to Australian history and heritage in Year 3 via an exploration of national celebrations, including Australia Day and Anzac Day, before going on to the European exploration and the colonisation of Australia in Years 4 to 6
- 2.3 The concept of Western Civilization is introduced in Year 7 through the depth study focussing on the Mediterranean region whilst, through the a focus on World History in Year 8 and 9 students have significant opportunity to examine Western Civilisation, its expansion and impacts
- 2.4 Balance is achieved in the secondary History curriculum through the combination of mandatory and optional depth studies. The mandatory depth studies include World War One (Year 9), World War II and “Rights and Freedoms” (Year 10). Choice is a key feature of the AC: History Curriculum from years 7 – 10 and it is vital to maintain this flexibility. Options within the depth studies:
 - 2.4.1 Enable teachers and schools to develop programs that engage their students by enabling them to selecting relevant depth studies
 - 2.4.2 Reflects the diversity within Australian society
 - 2.4.3 Provides flexibility into the future as Australia develops new links with countries within Asia and beyond
 - 2.4.4 Can enable students to have the flexibility in some schools to explore particular depth studies that interest them

Choice within the programing for individual schools is already restricted by the amount of time allocated to History in each state/territory by curriculum authorities. The original Australian Curriculum: History was written with a time allocation identified, however this has been subsequently removed.

3. Other considerations:

3.1 Teaching standards

HTAA notes that the Coalition Government is simultaneously undertaking a review of Teacher Education, conducted by Professor Greg Craven, and welcomes the clearly stated Terms of Reference for such a review.

3.2 Resourcing

In addition HTAA encourages the existing, and future governments, to provide funding for ongoing professional learning and the development of resources to assist with this.

The development of the Australian Curriculum has led to exciting possibilities with the pooling of resources in the development of resources.

- 3.2.1 Professional associations representing discrete disciplines have been involved in the development of resources through ESA. The web based resources provide support material to teachers across Australia (remote,

rural and metropolitan) who may not have access to working directly with other colleagues

- 3.2.2 Ongoing funding for professional learning is essential to ensure that the implementation of any version of the Australian Curriculum is successful.

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