

24 February 2014

AAAE Submission for the Review of the Australian Curriculum

The *Australian Alliance of Associations in Education (AAAE)* welcomes the opportunity to submit this document to the Review of the Australian Curriculum. As a group of associations who have already contributed significantly to the development and implementation of the curriculum we consider we are well placed in terms of experience and expertise to offer an authoritative view of the curriculum as it presently stands.

Background to the Australian Alliance of Associations in Education (AAAE)

In 2013 the AAAE was established to continue the work of the National Education Forum (NEF). The NEF was formed in 1992 for national professional teachers' associations to discuss education matters relevant to Australian schooling. The AAAE has now been established as a formal entity with the remit to represent national professional teachers <http://modellbygge.ifokus.se/discussions/4d714c65b9cb4622390606cf-gb-9-nu-ar-hon-klar> member associations:

"... so that their voice and the voice of the teachers and educators they represent are heard by the appropriate statutory authorities and governments for the improvement of Australian educational policy and practice."
November 2013 AAAE Constitution

The 23 national professional teachers' associations that comprise the AAAE consider the Review of the Australian Curriculum is within the associations' remit to comment on the Review's timing, offer views on the developmental processes of the Australian Curriculum, the Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), and the quality of the Australian Curriculum. Individual national professional teachers' member associations of the AAAE will be submitting their views pertaining to their learning area or specific area of educational interest.

Involvement with the development of the Australian Curriculum

The AAAE affirms its commitment to the Australian Curriculum and has the utmost respect for the processes the ACARA enacted in developing the curriculum. Five of our member associations, representing the learning areas of English, Geography, History, Mathematics and Science have been directly involved in the development of the five learning areas presently being implemented in Australian schools and cited in the Terms of Reference for the Review as subjects to have a 'particular focus'. Other AAAE members are presently working with the ACARA developing the learning areas of The Arts, Civics and Citizenship, Economics and Business, Health and Physical Education, Languages, and Technologies. As teaching experts in the currently implemented learning areas and the others in development, our members have been impressed and fully supportive of the inclusive, thoroughly professional and broad consultative processes instituted by the ACARA during the curriculum development process over the past five years. Whilst our members recognise that there are many stakeholders involved in the development of the curriculum and that consultation is a difficult exercise, we consider that as professionals our views have been listened to and as a result a reasoned and positive response was communicated from the ACARA.

View of the curriculum

AAAE is positive about the Australian Curriculum as it now stands. We consider the curriculum is a balanced, independent, robust and rigorous discipline-based 21st-century curriculum. We also believe that the richness and relevance of the curriculum is greatly enhanced by the ACARA's cross-curriculum priorities and general capabilities features within the curriculum. We would question the 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, our members who participated in the development of the curriculum as writers, advisors and consultants were thoroughly briefed to be cognisant of best practice from each state and across the world to create a balanced world-class curriculum with rigour.

The AAAE believes that the Australian curriculum, as a high quality curriculum, has been and will continue to be an important catalyst for the reinvigoration of curriculum, teaching and learning in Australian schools. It is reported by our member associations that the Australian Curriculum has been well received by teachers and that there is enthusiasm to teach this curriculum. As a result of the involvement of many of our member associations with the ACARA processes over an extended period of time, we see the curriculum as one of many strengths and support the continued implementation of the curriculum without significant changes being made to the content and structure of the curriculum at this point of time.

Position on the review

The AAAE is fully supportive of the need for an on-going review by the ACARA as the curriculum is being implemented in schools across Australia. We believe that the on-line format of the curriculum is conducive to on-going quality control as the curriculum is implemented. While we believe that this curriculum should be dynamic, we do not consider the timing of this Review to evaluate the curriculum as ideal considering the implementation of the curriculum is in its early stages. When one takes into account the degree of involvement of our members in developing the curriculum and the on-going work they are presently undertaking in supporting teachers to implement the curriculum across Australia, the AAAE considers the Review to be poorly timed.

The support for the implementation of the curriculum by our member associations is taking the form of providing extensive professional learning opportunities and developing comprehensive teaching and learning resources. The most significant resource development has been undertaken recently by six of our member associations (The Arts, English, Geography, History, Mathematics and Science) as part of the Supporting Australian Curriculum Online project (SACOL), funded by the Federal Government and implemented by Educational Services Australia (ESA). The AAAE believes that the curriculum needs more time to be taught before its impact on student learning can be properly evaluated in terms of robustness, rigour and balance. We believe that the thousands of hours of dedicated and expert work of our members over the past five years in developing, supporting and implementing the curriculum cannot be ignored by statements alluding to the curriculum being unbalanced, lacking rigour and not of world standard. It is the analysis of the curriculum, in action over time, that can and should resolve any such concerns.

What can the AAAE offer the review process?

The AAAE requests that the reviewers involve the relevant members of our associations as an integral and essential part of the review process. The national professional teacher member associations of the AAAE represents thousands of expert teachers across Australia with the discipline background, pedagogical content knowledge and current classroom experience to inform the review process. Such experience when reviewing is imperative if the review is to be apolitical, relevant and have credibility with the teachers of Australia. The AAAE and its member associations would welcome any approach from the Reviewers to be involved in the process of reviewing the Australian Curriculum.

Conclusion

The AAAE states its support for the Australian Curriculum in its current form and considers that the curriculum, developed by an inclusive and extensive consultation process, deserves the opportunity to be fully implemented before any significant changes are made to the structure or content of the curriculum. The AAAE is supportive of an on-going review process by the ACARA, by continued consultation with the relevant national professional teaching associations and other stakeholders.

The AAAE would welcome the opportunity to discuss the curriculum and put our views forward in order to utilise our extensive and significant curriculum, teaching and learning expertise in this, the review process.

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Malcolm McInerney". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Malcolm McInerney
AAAE President

Membership of the AAAE

1. Australian Association for Environmental Education (AAEE)
2. Australian Association for the Education of the Gifted and Talented (AAEGT)
3. Australian Association of Mathematics Teachers (AAMT)
4. Australian Association for the Teaching of English (AATE)
5. Australian Council for Computers in Education (ACCE)
6. Australian Council for Health, Physical Education and Recreation (ACHPER)
7. Australian Council of TESOL Associations (ACTA)
8. Australian Curriculum Studies Association (ACSA)
9. Art Education Australia (AEA)
10. Australian Federation of Modern Language Teachers Associations (AFMLTA)
11. Australian Geography Teachers Association (AGTA)
12. Australian Literacy Educators Association (ALEA)
13. Australian Society for Music Education (ASME)
14. Australian Science Teachers Association (ASTA)
15. Australian Teacher Education Association (ATEA)
16. Business Educators Australasia (BEA)
17. Early Childhood Australia (ECA)
18. Home Economics Institute of Australia (HEIA)
19. History Teachers Association of Australia (HTAA)
20. Primary English Teaching Association Australia (PETAA)
21. Social Educators Association of Australia (SEAA)
22. Society for the Provision of Education in Rural Australia (SPERA)
23. Vocational Education & Training Network Australia Inc (VETNetwork Australia)