



12 March 2014

REVIEW OF THE AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM

The ACT Council of Parents & Citizens Associations (Council) appreciates the opportunity to comment on the review of the Australian Curriculum, instigated by the Commonwealth Minister for Education.

Council consists of 86 parents & citizens associations of government schools in the ACT, representing some 60,000 parents, carers and community members. We have representatives on all ACT curriculum committees and advisory groups, and employ a policy officer to conduct research and prepare our submissions.

Council has contributed extensively to the implementation and creation of the Australian Curriculum. Council has made numerous submissions over six years, covering (and not limited to) the 11-12 and F-10 curriculum (including History, Maths, English, Science, languages), general capabilities, civics and citizenship, cross-curriculum capabilities and general comments.

COUNCIL RESPONSES TO THE TERMS OF REFERENCE

The development and implementation of the Australian Curriculum and the robustness, independence and balance of the Australian Curriculum, including:

- **The process of curriculum shaping, development, monitoring, evaluation and review.**

Council believes that there has been a good and proper consultation process in regard to the development of the Australian Curriculum. Numerous submissions have been called for between 2008 until the present, including face to face briefings with key stakeholders.

Council has been provided with plenty of opportunities to give feedback, both to ACARA and into the ACT implementation through the ACT Curriculum Taskforce. The cross-sector Taskforce has achieved numerous positive outcomes and has been developing ways of engaging parents through regular FAQs in newsletters. We believe that an approach such as this would work well in other states and territories.

Council has also given parents information and opportunities to contribute to the consultation process through our regular e-bulletins, Parent ACTION newsletter and meetings. Reactions from parents and teachers have been positive. The overwhelming majority support the idea of a national curriculum.

The implementation of the Australian Curriculum is at an advanced stage in the ACT. The ACT Education and Training Directorate (ETD) has supported schools and teachers well. Additionally, ETD has sustained a strong communication and consultation network through

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the Curriculum Taskforce. In the ACT both the implementation and the curriculum itself is currently working well.

Parents also find the information videos on the ACARA website to be engaging and highly effective. They provide important information in an accessible format.

- **The curriculum content from Foundation to Year 12 for subjects developed to date, with a particular focus on the curriculum for English, mathematics, science, history and geography.**

Parents (and indeed Council) are able to provide a 'real world' opinion of the Australian Curriculum, largely devoid of academic or political bias. Currently the content of the Australian Curriculum has been well received. Initially Council had reservations regarding the curriculum being too crowded. ACARA has addressed this concern by allowing more choice and including overviews and in-depth choices for the consideration of educators. ACT teachers have expressed approval at how their concerns have been addressed and managed.

The reviewers will provide recommendations to the Commonwealth Minister for Education regarding:

- **The curriculum shaping process followed by Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) to ensure that the curriculum is balanced and offers students an appropriate degree of choice and diversity;**

From our point of view, Council is satisfied that all stakeholders have had sufficient opportunities to participate and contribute to the process. In our opinion, ACARA has tried to capture different views of the world in a balanced manner.

- **The process of curriculum development to be followed by the ACARA for the development and revision of all future curriculum content;**

In Council's view, ACARA has developed a good model. Council would like this model to be retained as it has been efficient, transparent and effective. Considering how complex the task of developing a national curriculum has been, the ACARA website has substantial information that is reasonably accessible.

- **The content in learning areas, cross curriculum priorities and general capabilities of the Australian Curriculum;**

At a recent Council general meeting, delegates reaffirmed our previous support for cross curriculum areas and general capabilities as important for teachers to consider when teaching content in different areas. For example, the History curriculum has scenarios which are extremely useful, giving tips on how to embed the different priorities and capabilities in the courses.

Council has been looking at efforts to form a better understanding of disabilities in mainstream classes. An education and disability expert recently addressed Council. It was stressed that for a true understanding and interest in a topic (like disabilities) to be created, it

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must be embedded as useful exercises within normal classroom work, not just presented as a special lesson or unit. From this understanding and point of view, Council believes that a knowledge and understanding of Asia, indigenous issues and sustainability are important. Retaining them as a cross-curriculum priority is important to the education of our leaders of tomorrow.

- **The ongoing monitoring, evaluation and review of curriculum content used by ACARA to ensure independence, rigor and balance in curriculum development;**

Council is satisfied that ACARA has been willing to listen to a wide variety of stakeholders. Council's experience in dealing with ACARA in a consultation role has been positive.

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