

2 July 2021

ACARA
Level 13, Tower B,
Centennial Plaza,
280 Elizabeth Street,
Sydney 2000

Australian Curriculum Review

I write as Chair of the History Council of Victoria (HCV), the peak body for history in Victoria¹ and am pleased to make this submission to the Australian Curriculum Review for the Humanities and Social Sciences.²

The HCV believes that history shapes our identities, engages us as citizens, creates inclusive communities, is part of our economic well-being, teaches us to think critically and creatively, inspires leaders and is the foundation of our future generations.

The Value of History statement (https://www.historycouncilvic.org.au/value_of_history), endorsed by the History Councils of New South Wales, South Australia, Victoria and Western Australia, articulates these values. The statement argues that:

“History lays the groundwork for strong, diverse and inclusive communities that are vital places to live and work. Communities are wrapped in human memory: Indigenous knowledge, family stories, oral histories, social customs, cultural collections, heritage and civic commemorations. These all strengthen our connections and commitment to one another. History supports a sense of community identity and place; and that in turn promotes social cohesion, individual and collective wellbeing, and resilience.”

From that perspective we strongly endorse the objectives and content of the revised curriculum, which provides a coherent and sequential approach to the history of both Australia and other regions of the world. We have read with interest the detailed analysis of the curriculum and its changes produced by the History Teachers Association of Victoria and endorse both the general thrust of its submission and the many specific comments

¹ The History Council of Victoria includes representatives of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, the Australian Museums and Galleries Association (Victoria), the Department of Education and Training, the Heritage Council of Victoria, the History Teachers' Association of Victoria Ltd, Museums Victoria, the National Trust of Australia (Victoria), Old Treasury Building, the Professional Historians Association (Victoria & Tasmania) Inc., Public Record Office Victoria, the Royal Historical Society of Victoria Inc. and State Library Victoria. Our Board also includes representatives of three Victorian universities (currently Deakin, La Trobe and Monash).

² This response is supported by a majority of individual Board members but does not necessarily represent the views of all of the institutions they represent.

and suggestions made. We note only the importance of the underlying challenge for teachers: this is a highly challenging, detailed and rich curriculum, the effective delivery of which is made all the more difficult by the very constrained position of history in the timetable in most schools.

While mindful of the crowded content of the curriculum, we note the absence of reference to the highly significant twentieth-century women's activism in Australia. This mirrors the absence of women in the section on Federation (AC9HH9K16): note the readily accessible essay on the Australian Parliament home page: [Dr Helen Irving "Who are the Founding Mothers? The Role of Women in Australian Federation" – Parliament of Australia \(aph.gov.au\)](http://aph.gov.au)

In particular, we stress that increased knowledge of First Nations heritage must be at the heart of historical awareness in Australia and compliment ACARA on the recognition of this in the curriculum. We are pleased to see that, rather than the longstanding western assumption that there was one, unchanging Indigenous society and culture, there is due recognition of extraordinary diversity: hundreds of languages, a range of regional ecosystems, and evidence of change across time.

Thank you for accepting this submission. We wish ACARA well in this important review.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Peter McPhee'.

(Professor) Peter McPhee AM FAHA FASSA
Chair