

23 July 2015

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Committee Secretary
Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Committee Secretary

By email: em@aph.gov.au

Inquiry into Electoral Education

The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) is pleased to respond to the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters inquiry into the delivery of electoral education. ACARA's input to the Committee will be in relation to the following element of the terms of reference for the Inquiry:

- The teaching methodology and results of the national Civics and Citizenship Curriculum.

I would be happy to provide any further information desired by the Committee.

Yours sincerely

Robert Randall
Chief Executive Officer

ATTACHMENT

ACARA Submission to the Inquiry into Electoral Education

Purpose, enabling legislation and functions

The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) was established in December 2008 and became operational at the end of May 2009. ACARA is an independent, interjurisdictional statutory authority with a mission to improve the learning of all young Australians through world-class school curriculum, assessment and reporting.

Curriculum: We take a national approach to education through developing and implementing a robust and comprehensive national curriculum.

Assessment: We run the National Assessment Program, the national tests that students sit in school, including NAPLAN for all Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 students.

Reporting: We are responsible for collecting and publishing information on *My School* about the performance and resources of more than 9500 schools around the country. We also publish a range of reports, including the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) national report.

ACARA was established under the [Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority Act 2008 \(ACARA Act\)](#) on 8 December 2008.

Directions of the Education Council

Section 7 (3) of the ACARA Act requires ACARA to perform its functions and exercise its powers in line with the charter set by the Education Council and other written directions from the Education Council.

ACARA reports to the Education Council and to the federal Minister for Education about requirements under the [Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013](#) (PGPA Act).

Australian Curriculum

ACARA is responsible for the development of a world-class national curriculum from Foundation to Year 12 (F–12) that enables all young Australians to become successful learners, confident and creative individuals, as well as active, informed citizens.

Work on the Australian Curriculum is guided by the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians*. Once a new curriculum is endorsed by Education Council, it is then published by ACARA on the Australian Curriculum website (www.australiancurriculum.edu.au) and becomes available for implementation by states and territories.

The key elements of the F–12 Australian Curriculum are the rationale, aims, content descriptions (with content elaborations) and achievement standards (with annotated work samples).

The Australian Curriculum comprises the following learning areas:

- English
- Mathematics
- Science
- Humanities and social sciences
(History, Geography, Economics and Business, Civics and Citizenship)
- Health and physical education
- Languages (11 languages currently available)
- The Arts (Dance, Drama, Media Arts, Music, Visual Arts)
- Technologies (Design and Technologies and Digital Technologies)

The Australian Curriculum includes seven general capabilities: literacy, numeracy, information and communication technology (ICT) capability, critical and creative thinking, personal and social capability, ethical understanding and intercultural understanding.

The Australian Curriculum also includes three cross-curriculum priorities: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures, Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia, and sustainability.

The overall development of the Australian Curriculum is guided by the *Shape of the Australian Curriculum* (v1.0–4.0). The process for developing the national curriculum is outlined in ACARA's *Curriculum Development Process* (v6.0). Design specifications for the Australian Curriculum are outlined in the *Curriculum Design Paper* (v3.1). These documents are available on ACARA's website.

Development of the Australian Curriculum has four stages: shaping, writing, implementation, and, monitoring and evaluation. In brief, this work has unfolded to date as follows:

- in the first phase from 2008 with the Interim National Curriculum Board (INCB) and subsequently ACARA, the F–10 curriculums for four learning areas (English, mathematics, science and history) were developed and implementation began
- in the second phase (from mid–2010) and third phase (from October 2011), other learning areas – languages, geography, the arts, technologies, health and physical education, economics and business, as well as civics and citizenship – were developed.

ACARA collaborates with other national agencies in supporting the development and implementation of the Australian Curriculum. For example, ACARA works with:

- Education Services Australia, regarding online resource discovery and access

- the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, on professional learning requirements for the Australian Curriculum.

Humanities

ACARA published a learning area statement for the humanities and social sciences on the Australian Curriculum website in October 2014. The learning area statement provides a coherent view and serves as a landing page for the humanities and social sciences on the Australian Curriculum website. The purpose of this statement is to make meaningful connections between the subjects of history, geography, civics and citizenship, as well as economics and business. The statement also assists teachers and education authorities in their planning for implementation and delivery of F-10 Australian Curriculum for the humanities and social sciences.

In response to another key action (arising from the agreed themes in 2015 to improve the Australian Curriculum), ACARA developed a combined humanities and social sciences learning area curricula for Foundation to Year 7. The aim of this work is to make the curriculum more manageable in the primary years. The combined subject includes:

- content descriptions for the sub-strands of history, geography, civics and citizenship, as well as economics and business,
- a combined set of skills and
- one achievement standard for each year level.

During the reporting year, ACARA worked with teachers and schools to collect annotated work samples which make up a portfolio of work. These samples will illustrate the achievement standard for each year level of civics and citizenship, as well as economics and business. The Authority also collected three portfolios for geography to illustrate above, satisfactory and below achievement of the standard.

Status of the Australian Curriculum and Civics and Citizenship Curriculum

In November 2013, ministers agreed that the F-10 curriculum for civics and citizenship could be made available for state and territory use. The curriculum was released as 'available for use; awaiting final endorsement' on the Australian Curriculum [website](#) in February 2014.

South Australia has completed implementation, while ACT, Northern Territory and Queensland have commenced implementation of the civics and citizenship curriculum. The remaining states and territories have not yet commenced implementation of this curriculum.

National Assessment Program

The National Assessment Program (NAP) is the means by which governments, education authorities and schools can determine whether or not young Australians are reaching important educational goals for literacy and numeracy. The NAP monitors progress towards the outcomes and targets of the Melbourne Declaration and those of the Council of Australian Governments (COAG).

The elements of the NAP managed by ACARA are the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) and the national sample assessments in Science Literacy, Civics and Citizenship, as well as Information and Communication Technology Literacy.

NAP tests are constructed to assess knowledge, skills and understandings appropriate for students in particular year levels, to be interesting and engaging for students throughout Australia, and, to challenge students at all levels of ability.

NAP – Civics and Citizenship sample assessment. (NAP-CC)

The NAP sample assessments in civics and citizenship (NAP-CC) assess a selection of Year 6 and Year 10 students in civics and citizenship education.

Civics refers to the study of Australia's system of government, historical and current governance practices, Australian identity and culture, democratic processes, the judicial system and the impact of local, state, national, regional and global influences. Citizenship relates to being part of a group that carries with it a sense of belonging or identity and includes rights and responsibilities, duties and privileges.

NAP-CC tests have been held every three years since 2004. In 2003, its fourth cycle, NAP-CC was trialled and delivered to students online for the first time. This represented a significant milestone for national assessment in Australia, demonstrating both the effectiveness of online assessment as well as the readiness of many schools to participate via this mode of administration.

Results from the NAP - Civics and Citizen 2013 sample assessment

The 2013 NAP-CC sample assessment was administered to 11,255 students from 671 government, Catholic and independent schools between 9 October and 5 November 2013 in all states and territories. The assessment included an online test with multiple choice and open-ended questions and an online student questionnaire.

The 2013 NAP - CC public report provides an analysis of the performance by gender, geographic location, Indigenous status, and language background other than English at each year level. In addition, the results of the student questionnaire included in the

report provide an insight into students' perceptions of citizenship, their attitudes towards a number of civic-related issues and their civic engagement.

NAP CC measures student achievement against a Proficient Standard. The Proficient Standard for Year 6 is Level 2 and for Year 10 is Level 3. Each Proficiency Standard is a point on the scale that represents a “challenging but reasonable” expectation of student achievement at that year level and exceeds minimum competence. The proportion of students achieving at or above the relevant Proficient Standard in NAP CC is a key performance measure set out in *Measurement Framework for Schooling in Australia 2012*.

Key findings from [2013 NAP - CC public report](#):

- Civics and citizenship student performance at the national level has remained relatively consistent and is tracking well across assessment cycles (2004, 2007, 2010 and 2013), both in terms of mean student achievement and the proportion of students performing at or above the Proficient Standard.
- **Year 10:** In 2013, at the national level, 44 per cent of Year 10 students reached the Proficient Standard compared to 49 per cent in 2010, however, the difference was not statistically significant. The range in percentages of those achieving at or above the Proficient Standard varied from 20 per cent in the Northern Territory to 51 per cent in New South Wales.
- **Year 6:** Nationally, there were similar percentages of Year 6 students at or above the Proficient Standard at 52 per cent.
- **Gender:** Nationally at Year 6, female students outperformed male students by 21 score points on the NAP – CC Scale, and this difference was statistically significant.
- In Year 10, the gender difference in favour of female students was 14 score points and this difference was also statistically significant. However, the gender difference was much smaller in 2013 when compared to the previous assessment in 2010. (It needs to be recognised that this change may be a result of the transition from paper-based to online testing in 2013.)
- Fifty-five per cent of female Year 6 students performed at or above the Proficient Standard compared to 48 per cent of male students. In Year 10, 46 per cent of female Year 10 students had test scores at or above the Proficient Standard while 42 per cent of male students performed at a similar level. In 2010, 53 per cent of Year 10 girls achieved at or above the Proficient Standard, which was statistically significantly higher than the percentage in the 2013 online assessment.

- **Performance by indigenous status:** Fifty-one per cent of non-Indigenous Year 6 students performed at or above the Proficient Standard compared to 22 per cent of Indigenous students. Among Year 10 students, 45 per cent of non-Indigenous Year 10 students had test scores at or above the Proficient Standard compared to 17 per cent of Indigenous students. These findings are consistent with previous cycles and other national assessments.
- **Languages other than English:** In both Year 6 and Year 10, 21 per cent of students came from homes in which languages other than English were spoken (in place of or in addition to English).
- **Overall the data from this survey/questionnaire** (compared to 2010) suggest that students demonstrate positive attitudes regarding important citizenship issues corresponding to many of the aims and rationale of civics and citizenship education in Australia. Students' attitudes, values and reported participation as active citizens have remained consistent with a tendency towards higher levels of positive dispositions among students.
- Students' civic interest and valuing of civic action were positively associated with NAP – CC scale scores. Even stronger associations were found with students' confidence to actively engage in civic action. In Year 10, students who had higher levels of expectations of becoming actively involved in civic activities in the future had somewhat higher scores on the NAP – CC test.