

Inquiry Submission: Social Education Victoria


Social Education Victoria has supported teachers of social studies, through many curriculum iterations, for over 50 years. Our members are teachers of VCE Sociology, VCE Politics and Civics and Citizenship from all sectors across Victoria. We are active members of our professional community through the Council of Professional Teachers Associations of Victoria (CPTAV), Social and Citizenship Education Association of Australia (SCEAA) and The Australian Sociological Association (TASA). We are regular recipients of Department of Education funding for initiatives for students and teachers in this area, and we develop learning resources, publish textbooks and present professional learning in humanities disciplines, as well as the Victorian Curriculum general capabilities and student voice. We welcome this inquiry and thank the committee for prioritising the voices of teachers and students in this process.





Key ideas:

The Mparntwe declaration confirms the education system's goal of supporting children and young people to be 'active and informed members of the community'. Meanwhile, humanities educators around the country know that that they will have to fight every step of the way for Civics classes in their timetables, for space to engage in professional learning, for resources within the school, and possibly may need to prepare themselves for accusations of bias if students *do* choose to engage in democratic processes.

Abbreviation: Civics and Citizenship Education = CCE

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If CCE is a priority, then prioritise it.


- Decades of neglect of CCE has resulted in school timetables often giving minimal time to civics subjects, and it frequently being ‘lost’ in under-resourced integrated subjects.
- CCE knowledge and skills are most impactful when taught as part of a coherent humanities course that includes robust and distinct learning in history, geography, and economics. This is not the same as a short standalone unit, or a single school trip to Canberra.
- The changes to tertiary funding for humanities degrees has reinforced a community perception that the humanities are a ‘waste of time’ and ‘won’t help you get a job’. If we are serious about improving CCE, we need to stop sending the message to students and families that studying the humanities is pointless, and instead highlight the ways that humanities build genuine understanding of how the world works, critical thinking, literacy skills and a swathe of other skills and knowledge that students will need to be successful, empathetic ‘active and informed members of their communities, now and into the future.


We need more robust CCE for teachers and students.


- Subsequent learning – such as that in senior years humanities subjects, tertiary study and beyond – suffers as a result of inconsistent attention given to CCE in the F-10 curriculum.
- Teachers need time and space to build subject matter knowledge (both in CCE content itself, and in the pedagogical content knowledge required to effectively teach it).
- The current teacher shortage has meant that schools are finding it very difficult to support teachers’ access to professional learning, with CCE being an area in which this is most sorely needed.

We need CCE that is student-centred, dynamic and responsive.

- We are living in a period beset by significant social and political challenges; we owe students the best possible opportunity to understand those challenges if they’re to have a chance at navigating them successfully. Teachers and students need to be supported to engage with issues robustly and respectfully, rather than facing pressure to avoid controversy.
- CCE which encourages deliberation on contemporary issues, supported by other critical literacies (such as media literacy), will help to support young people to be better informed and more empathetic members of the community.
- CCE can be a timetabled subject or an extracurricular activity – but if all students are to be provided with meaningful access to this form of learning, components must be mandatory.
- Many students find that engaging with their community, with issues that they care about, is the most effective way of learning CCE – this should be supported.
- As a members’ association, we are painfully aware that the schools that are offering the most robust and well-resourced humanities programs are typically the most privileged in our community. This trend, left unchecked, entrenches inequality.
- CCE which features open classroom environments accompanied by civic deliberation have been shown to be the most effective approach for students from diverse backgrounds.

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