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Expert barred from history panel

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A NSW bureaucrat has been barred from helping recommend what year 9 and 10 school students should be taught about Australian history.

Jennifer Lawless, a Board of Studies inspector who has taught history for 20 years, was named by the federal Minister for Education, Julie Bishop, yesterday as one of several experts who would help overhaul the history curriculum.

The group also includes the historians Geoffrey Blainey, of the University of Melbourne, and Nicholas Brown, of the Australian National University, and the political commentator Gerard Henderson, from the Sydney Institute.

The NSW Minister for Education, John Della Bosca, said the history reference group was a political stunt and he would not let Ms Lawless take part.

"NSW will not lend its highly skilled personnel and its reputation for having excellent teaching and learning materials to an ideologically driven stunt where there has been no consultation and no attempt to achieve balance," he said.

"Geoffrey Blainey is a respected historian, but he has very firm views on one interpretation of Australian history which happens to accord with the Prime Minister's. Gerard Henderson, again, is a fine and respected commentator on public affairs, but he's not a professional historian."

But Ms Bishop said later: "Why is minister Della Bosca seeking to deprive other states of the expertise gained in NSW from the teaching of Australian history as a stand-alone subject?"

Anna Patty with AAP

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