

## Teachers united in mockery

Anna Patty Education Editor  
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HISTORY teachers yesterday criticised a new history curriculum proposed by John Howard as too overcrowded and politicised.

The Prime Minister aims to force all schools to teach 150 hours of Australian history to students in years 9 and 10.

Paul Kiem, president of the Australian History Teachers' Association, said students in NSW were already being taught 100 hours of Australian history as a stand-alone subject.

"It would be an extra 50 hours in NSW which would be at the cost of another subject," he said.

"We are very concerned about the way it has been released as part of an election campaign."

Mr Kiem said the year 9 and 10 curriculum was already crowded and Mr Howard's plan took no account of Australian history already taught in earlier years.

"In terms of the implementation, it doesn't take into account a kindergarten to year 12 perspective and that is critical to the success of any Australian history course," he said.

Tony Taylor, the head of Monash University's National Centre for History Education, was commissioned by the Federal Government to write the Australian history curriculum.

Unhappy with the draft, the Federal Government hand-picked a panel, including the conservative historian Geoffrey Blainey and the political commentator Gerard Henderson to rewrite the curriculum.

The outcome, Professor Taylor said, had almost doubled the content to be taught. "It has serious problems as it currently stands because it has far too much detail and will be regarded by many teachers as a huge burden," he said.

"It will remind NSW teachers of [former NSW premier] Bob Carr's syllabus which had to be revised in 2003 for similar reasons. On that basis alone, I don't think it is practical."

Mr Howard said he would write to the states and territories, asking them to introduce the history course by the beginning of 2009 as a condition of Commonwealth funding.

"I believe this country has badly neglected the teaching of Australian history. We have lapsed into teaching it in accordance with a very uncoordinated, haphazard, thematic approach instead of doing it with a proper regard to the narrative and the unfolding and compelling story of Australia," Mr Howard said.

"The guide will divide the teaching of Australian history into a number of periods, naturally commencing with the period when this country was occupied by the indigenous people of Australia, the first Australians, and culminating with a study of contemporary times."

The national curriculum lists more than 70 milestones including indigenous settlement, James Cook's landing, the gold rushes, the White Australia policy, the first Holden car and the dismissal of the Whitlam Labor government.

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