



The Hon Peter Garrett MP
Minister for School Education, Early Childhood and Youth
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Minister

OPEN LETTER REGARDING THE DEVELOPMENT OF AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM (HISTORY)

As you are aware, the History Teachers' Association of Australia (HTAA) is the peak body that represents secondary history teachers in Australia. At our recent national conference of the association, held in Adelaide last week, it was clear that there is widespread disappointment with ACARA's curriculum development and review processes. In particular, there is a lack of confidence in the way in which ACARA is currently handling the development of senior history courses. As a result, once again HTAA expresses urgent concern about the lack of direction, poor communication and inadequate consultation processes used by ACARA in the development of the Australian Curriculum.

Poor communication in regard to developments with the senior courses is especially concerning given HTAA's contribution to and vital interest in this area. We refer to:

- The failure to explain the rationale behind the initial 6 unit framework for the Senior Secondary Curriculum.
- The failure to explain why this structure has subsequently been reduced to 4 units.
- The lack of clear direction and guidelines for those involved in curriculum development.

We also have major concerns about the composition and processes of consultation and advisory group meetings. There is a lack of consistency in personnel attending consecutive consultation meetings. This means that many new participants are overwhelmed and underprepared to make informed contributions. Subsequently, advice given to developers and writers may represent the strongly held opinions of individuals who are not always involved in the process of general consultation or sensitive to the needs of the profession or the discipline as a whole. This situation is only exacerbated by the absence of a clear vision or guidelines against which all contributions can be measured.

As it stands, the consultation process simply does not deliver strong, clear or well-informed advice for ACARA to act upon in providing guidance to curriculum developers and writers. Too often, this results in an ad hoc churning of detail that bears no resemblance to what one would expect of a process that is supposed to deliver 21st century courses that will inspire and excite teachers and students.

HTAA urges you as the Minister responsible to address these issues with ACARA as a matter of urgency. HTAA remains supportive of the Australian Curriculum, but believes that the processes underpinning the development of the curriculum need to be refined so that those involved in the consultation process have a clear understanding of the aims and purpose of it.

Yours faithfully

L Secker
Vice President and
National Curriculum Spokesperson
9 October 2011