

## Building a curriculum for whole individuals and society

Presentation by Barry McGaw, Chair, National Curriculum Board, at TCFNSW Conference 16 May 2009.

Summary from powerpoint presentation.

### Why a national curriculum?

International comparisons have shown that Australia between 2000 and 2006 has fallen behind in measures of reading. While some countries have improved students at the bottom and/or at the top of the range Australian students have shown no improvement and at the top have fallen behind.

International comparisons have become more important than intrastate comparisons and Australia stands to benefit from acting together. National curriculum would address the needs of teachers and students who move interstate and provide a more efficient use of education resources.

The current move to national curriculum has been driven by Coalition of Australian Governments (COAG) and the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) and the National Curriculum Board has been replaced by a wider authority The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and reporting Authority (ACARA).

The Melbourne Declaration of goals for Australian schools acknowledges that *schools play a vital role in promoting intellectual, physical, social, emotional, moral, spiritual and aesthetic development & wellbeing*. There is recognition of the spiritual wellbeing of students.

The initial brief for national curriculum work was for English, mathematics, science and history from 2001. Early additions were geography and languages other than English and then, in April 2009, The Arts. Now, a report has been requested for October 2009 on the inclusion of the whole curriculum.

After extensive reviews and consultations on initial drafts, final papers have been published 6 May 2009. The principles and specifications include:

- Making clear what is to be taught and learned
- Setting high standards assuming all can learn
- Building firm foundational skills
- Being feasible for teachers - time and resources available, language of documents, consistency with other curriculum areas
- Valuing teachers' professional knowledge
- Reflecting local contexts
- Using evidence based research

Already a number of key issues have been acknowledged:

1. De-cluttering to achieve depth (at the expense of breadth?)
2. Access to supporting resources - electronic publication, links to resources, annotated student work samples to illustrate standards
3. Teacher professional development - links to responsible agencies, initial and continuing professional development.

Timeline - The first batch of subjects will need to be completed by mid 2010 to provide planning for implementation in 2011.

The website <http://www.acara.edu.au/> can provide current information on developments in national curriculum.