

02 July 2021

TO: ACARA

### **SUBMISSION – REVIEW OF CURRICULUM**

*Background* – Australia’s primary and secondary student education standards have fallen since the establishment of the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) in the Rudd/Gillard era and the standards continue to fall.

Prior to the establishment of ACARA, Australia sat within the top ten in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). Currently, based on the 2018 PISA study, Australia is ranked 15<sup>th</sup> in Science, 16<sup>th</sup> in Reading and 29<sup>th</sup> in Maths, clearly, a long term decline lagging behind countries it once outperformed such as Poland, Portugal and Slovenia.

The evidence is that the curriculum is faulty and teacher education standards have also fallen.

If the review of the curriculum is adopted Australia’s education standards will further decline.

*Comment* - The review strengthens the focus on Australian Indigenous History, Asia and Environmentalism and virtually wipes out the history of Christianity and Western Civilisation. Students could complete 13 years of schooling without any real understanding of how the civilisations of ancient Rome, ancient Greece and ancient Egypt followed by Christianity and then the Enlightenment of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries with its emphasis on reason to advance understanding of the universe, knowledge, liberty, progress, tolerance, fraternity, constitutional government and separation of Church and State, created the modern liberal democracy which Australian’s enjoy today.

The study of Indigenous history is important but it is dangerous to place too much emphasis on a history which is based on ‘word of mouth’. This is demonstrated by the recent fiasco of the book, Dark Emu written by Professor Bruce Pascoe. Anthropologist Professor Peter Sutton with experience of 40 years in the study of aboriginal history and archaeologist Doctor Keryn Walshe have described Dark Emu as being poorly researched and littered with unsourced material, selective quotations and weak evidence yet the book is still being used in school Indigenous History lessons.

It is also dangerous to place emphasis on Environmentalism. What has happened is that environmentalism instead of being a study of the environment, has become “climate change” and the reduction of carbon dioxide emissions in the atmosphere.

What students are taught should be factual NOT unproven climate alarmism as promoted by the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

Carbon Dioxide is a colourless, odourless, incombustible gas present in the atmosphere and formed during respiration, the decomposition and combustion of organic compounds and in the reaction with carbonates. Formula CO<sub>2</sub>. The “carbon cycle is the circulation of carbon between living organisms and their surroundings. CO<sub>2</sub> from the atmosphere (with water) is synthesised by plants into plant tissue, which is ingested and metabolized by animals and reduced to CO<sub>2</sub> again during respiration and decay.” (Collins English Dictionary)

Clearly, CO<sub>2</sub> is not a pollutant and does not warm the Earth but is an “Ecologically beneficial trace gas that forms the base of almost the entire planetary food chain and which currently exists at atmospheric starvation levels of 380 parts per million (PPM) compared to up to ten times that concentration and more during the preceding 600 million years of multicellular life on Earth.” (Carter R M, Professor, National Observer, Summer 2008/2009) NB by 2020 CO<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere had risen to around 417ppm contributing to a 14% increase in the amount of green vegetation on the Planet since 1982. (The Australian Newspaper October 20, 2015)

The question is “Why does the Australian Curriculum allow teachers to focus children’s attention on false material about the need for reduction in carbon emissions and the dire consequences for all if emissions are not reduced all contrary to the scientific evidence detailed above?”

The result is that many students have increased levels of anxiety about the future of the planet and are encouraged to march in the streets demanding government action on climate change along the lines of the “Extinction Rebellion”.

It is perhaps understandable that young impressionable teachers are influenced by World Leaders who talk about “existential crisis of our times, climate emergency, disaster, crisis...” but “in fact however when you actually read the literature, there is no support for that kind of hysteria at all. The science is insufficient to make useful predictions about how the climate will change in coming decades, much less what effect humans will have on it.” (Unsettled ?, Digital Production 2021, Koonin, Steven E, University of New York Scientist with impeccable academic and career credentials including as then President Barrack Obama’s Under-Secretary for Science in 2009.

The above and there is much more demonstrates that the school curriculum has been totally politicised as University of Queensland Emeritus Professor, Kenneth Wiltshire notes when calling for ACARA to be abolished saying “We will create a nation of cretins awash in a world where they have no understanding of the history of civilisation, human thought, human philosophy, values or principles which have produced lessons to be acknowledged by all societies.” (The Weekend Australian Newspaper, May 1-2, 2021) This is just one of many criticisms of the curriculum review by respected academics and education experts.

What is needed – The curriculum must be totally overhauled with the focus to be on foundational, fundamental knowledge in mathematics, writing including grammar and punctuation and reading based on the use of phonics. This will be enhanced by the study of English language and literature.

This must be supported by the comprehensive study of the history of Western Civilisation and the functions and operation of Australia's parliamentary and government systems.

There is a place for Indigenous History but it must be subject to the 'truth' test.

The role of technology and related subjects will be important.

There should be an unapologetic drive for students to strive for excellence and reach their academic potential. To achieve this, the focus must be on knowledge rather than skills. Once the knowledge is ingrained then skills development will be a natural.

Role of Teachers - There is significant evidence that the standard of teaching has deteriorated in the realm of recent graduates. This must be examined and corrected as Australia must seek to have the best teachers across the nation.

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