



**ethnic
communities'
council of
victoria**

21 May 2010

**ECCV SUBMISSION TO THE AUSTRALIAN
CURRICULUM ASSESSMENT AND REPORTING
AUTHORITY**

1. The Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria (eccv) welcomes the opportunity to provide input on the draft versions of the National Curriculum for the K - 10 in English, History and Science, and to be part of this exciting new venture in Australian education.
2. Established in 1974 as a voluntary community-based organisation, eccv lobbies all levels of government and advocates on behalf of multicultural communities in a range of areas. For over 35 years eccv has remained the principal liaison point among ethnic communities, government and the wider community in Victoria. Our role includes supporting, consulting, liaising with and providing information to Victoria's ethnic communities.
3. eccv commends the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) for their commitment to developing a national curriculum that is focused on being inclusive of all Australians, whether new arrivals or descendents of several generations of Australians.
4. eccv also supports the dedication of and collaboration amongst all levels of government in Australia, including the Victorian State Government, in seeking to provide quality education for all irrespective of socio-economic status, ethnicity, gender or religious affiliation.
5. Enabling schools to achieve the objectives of the national curriculum requires that the educational framework be relevant and responsive to the range of student groups, and their varied experiences, backgrounds and needs.
6. While eccv is aware of the importance of incorporating into the curriculum the three dimensions identified by ACARA—namely, the Indigenous, Asia and sustainability dimensions—we suggest that ACARA extend the sustainability dimension to include a multicultural educational framework. This would allow cultural diversity to be used as a learning resource that provides students with the skills, knowledge and attitudes needed to participate actively as informed members of society at the local, national, regional and international levels.
7. eccv has long recognised the importance of including a multicultural educational framework within each level of the formal educational system for the success of a dynamic, diverse

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democracy. This focus on multicultural perspectives within education promotes a sense of belonging amongst students through shared understandings of one's own cultural identity, its connection to the mainstream culture, and of the inherent benefits of cultural, linguistic and religious diversity.

8. To facilitate access to education for migrant and minority students, eccv recognises that the complex issues and challenges faced by students and teachers within culturally diverse settings must be addressed. These include experiences of racial or ethnic stereotyping; a lack of a sense of identity or belonging; differing culturally influenced expectations of education and acceptable behaviour within classroom settings; gender issues; and peer relationships at school.
9. eccv believes that these complex issues can be addressed through the national curriculum by injecting into the learning areas of History, English and Science content that is culturally appropriate, responsive to the different learning styles of students and conducive to embracing the many facets of Australian society.
10. In the learning area of History, eccv supports inclusion of the three themes of Indigenous, regional and world history. We also suggest, however, that the History learning area include an acknowledgement of: Australia's migration history; the historical development of multiculturalism over the last century; and the social, cultural and economic contribution of migrants to this nation.
11. eccv also recommends that the world history perspective provided in this learning area be extended beyond the heritage of Western civilisation to incorporate all other nations that have contributed to the national makeup of Australia.
12. In the learning area of English, eccv acknowledges the significance of the English language as part of the country's national identity and as an active mechanism of inclusion whereby students' cultural differences are bridged through a common spoken language.
13. However, eccv believes that there are also many advantages for students of maintaining and developing languages spoken at home or embracing a language other than English (LOTE). While we are aware that considerable effort is currently focused on broadening the linguistic confidence and capabilities of students and on promoting multilingualism as an advantageous attribute, we believe that many students have been losing interest in LOTE studies due to inadequate institutional support for achieving international multilingual standards. Thus, eccv suggests that a more coordinated campaign of incentives be developed that includes, for example,

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scholarships and subsidies for students wishing to further their LOTE abroad.

14. We praise the intense focus on the use of literature in the English curriculum, yet also recommend that a component of the literary texts chosen cover practical issues that students from migrant backgrounds can relate to. Themes studied in English should include topics about immigrants, multiculturalism, identity formation, racism and stereotyping. Cultural and linguistic diversity needs to be holistically incorporated into the educational curriculum at a more academic level.
15. We also advise that teachers need to more proactively identify students who are constrained by their proficiency in the English language and are unable to articulate clearly what they know. Ongoing support for students for whom English is a second language (ESL) is paramount to building their social confidence and ensuring their engagement with learning.
16. In the learning area of science, eccv supports ACARA's decision to revert to the more traditional sciences of the physical, biological, space and earth sciences. We also support the inclusion of resource material on the theory of sustainability and climate change in the science curriculum.
17. Establishing a classroom dialogue that explores the themes of adaptation, biodiversity, population growth, the role of consumption and broader environmental sustainability is essential. This debate would help to build young Australians' capacity to undertake the significant behavioural changes required to ensure the continued health of Australia's ecological systems.
18. Overall, eccv recommends that the national curriculum teach students to find the commonality in plurality, to respect all cultures and to appreciate the positive contribution migrants make to Australia. This can be achieved by implementing a multicultural education program that develops in students an informed and grounded understanding of the nature of cultural diversity in Australia.
19. Alongside the provision of in-class material on cultural awareness, eccv believes that extra-curricular activities are a valuable means of developing healthy inter-cultural ties. Therefore, promoting regular and meaningful interactions amongst students, their families, their local communities and the broader society is essential to counter stereotyping.
20. eccv recommends that schools engage more actively with community agencies and organisations as they are experienced in running community events on a range of specific, culturally

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oriented topics, as this could provide a further critical resource for students.

21. eccv also proposes that effective links between schools and communities be established by the creation of the position of a community-based cultural diversity facilitator, whose role is to form community partnerships to meet the social demands of culturally diverse school communities, and to act as an intermediary amongst families from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds, teachers and students. Other responsibilities of this facilitator include assisting CALD families to better understand the schooling system and to be more involved in school life.
22. eccv believes that this curriculum should also include a whole unit of study on the media and the role they play in creating or reinforcing cultural stereotypes. This area of study could build the confidence and ability of students to handle the media's biased representation sometimes attached to certain migrant youth in the reporting of crime.
23. On a final note, eccv suggests that teachers be given adequate training to understand the intergenerational pressures and challenges experienced by students from CALD backgrounds.

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