

## Human Rights Education and National Curriculum

### *Melbourne Declaration of Educational Goals for Young Australians*

The *Melbourne Declaration of Educational Goals for Young Australians*, issued by all Australian Ministers for Education in December 2008, includes an explicit commitment to supporting young Australians to become active and informed citizens who are able to act with moral and ethical integrity and are committed to values of democracy, equity and justice. The *Melbourne Declaration* is available at [www.mceecdya.edu.au](http://www.mceecdya.edu.au). It sets the direction for Australian schooling over the next 10 years.

### *National Curriculum*

The Australian Government has committed to the development of a rigorous, world-class national curriculum for all Australian students from kindergarten to Year 12. The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) has been established to implement this important work, which is well under way.

The draft Australian Curriculum in English, mathematics, science and history is open for public consultation until 23 May 2010 on the ACARA website at [www.acara.edu.au](http://www.acara.edu.au). National curriculum in geography, languages and the arts languages will be developed as part of ACARA's second phase of work. In addition, ACARA will report to the Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs (MCEECDYA) on the approach that will be taken to other learning areas identified in the *Melbourne Declaration*, including civics and citizenship.

### *National Curriculum: History*

The development of national curriculum in history will support the teaching of civics and citizenship and thereby help improve students' understanding of human rights. The draft *Australian Curriculum: History* notes that the curriculum will enable students:

*... to follow the emergence of key principles of citizenship, the arguments they engendered, the changing institutional forms of government and civil society, and the circumstances in which they have flourished or failed. The skills of historical inquiry equip students to make sense of moral dilemmas and to make informed judgments.*

The draft curriculum includes a depth study in Year 10 on struggles for freedom and rights. Topics to be covered in the depth study include:

- The contribution of the United Nations and other international organisations, treaties and declarations to establishing and monitoring human rights throughout the world,
- The effects of the Cold War on human rights and freedoms throughout the world,

- The origins and consequences of anti-colonial movements and civil rights movements, one to be chosen from (a) the 20th century independence movement in India (b) the 1960s US civil rights movement (c) anti-colonial resistance and war in Vietnam (d) the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa,
- The civil rights struggles of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with reference to government policies (including protection, assimilation, integration, reconciliation and self determination), the 1967 Referendum, the Mabo decision and the Apology to the Stolen Generations, and
- A case study of the influence of a key individual, group or event in the struggle for rights and freedoms.

*National Curriculum Second Phase: Geography*

The development of national curriculum in geography will also support the teaching of civics and citizenship. An initial shaping paper in geography will be released for consultation in 2010.

*National Curriculum Third Phase: Civics and Citizenship*

ACARA will report to MCEECDYA on the approach that will be taken to civics and citizenship in the national curriculum.

*Current State and Territory Curriculum*

National *Statements of Learning for Civics and Citizenship* for Years 3, 5, 7 and 9, which specify learning opportunities to be offered to all children, are already included in curriculum in all states and territories. The full text of the *Statements of Learning* is available at [www.mceecdya.edu.au](http://www.mceecdya.edu.au).

The *Statements of Learning* recognise that civics and citizenship aspects of curricula in Australia seek to provide students with the opportunity to develop, inter alia, “an appreciation of the local, state, national, regional and global rights and responsibilities of citizenship and civic life”. Some examples of the coverage of human rights in the *Statements of Learning* are provided below:

Year	Students in are expected :
Year 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to understand that “rules have a key purpose in protecting people’s rights and ensuring they fulfil their responsibilities” and</li> <li>• to “develop an understanding of personal rights and responsibilities in familiar contexts”.</li> </ul>
Year 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to “develop an understanding of their rights and responsibilities and engage with these within their school and community”.</li> </ul>
Year 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to “explore the civic values and rights and responsibilities of citizens in a democratic society” and</li> <li>• to “investigate the contributions of people who have helped achieve civil and political rights in Australia and around the world”.</li> </ul>

Year 9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• to “assess how majority rule is balanced with respect for minorities in the exercise of democratic power and civic decision-making”,</li><li>• to “investigate and participate in ways to prevent and counter acts of racism, prejudice and discrimination” and</li><li>• to “have an understanding of Australia’s development as a self-governing nation from colonisation to the present and the achievement of civil and political rights in Australia”.</li></ul>
--------	---

*National Assessment Program – Civics and Citizenship*

*National Assessment Program – Civics and Citizenship* assessments for representative samples of Year 6 primary and Year 10 secondary school students were conducted in 2004 and 2007. Year 6 students were expected to be able to ‘describe the key features of Australian democracy’ and ‘identify the rights and responsibilities of citizens in Australia’s democracy’.

The reports of the 2004 and 2007 assessments can be found at [www.mceecdya.edu.au](http://www.mceecdya.edu.au). The next national assessment will be conducted in October 2010.