

APPROACHES TO NATIONAL CURRICULUM WORK

**INVITATIONAL
SYMPOSIUM**

AUGUST 2006



REPORT

The Approaches to National Curriculum Work Symposium 2006 was held at the Airport Hilton Hotel in Melbourne on Monday 28 August and Tuesday 29 August 2006.

The symposium was organised and managed as an initiative of the Australian Curriculum Studies Association (ACSA).





Approaches to National Curriculum Work, Invitational Symposium — Report

This report was prepared by Vic Zbar, from Zbar Consulting Pty Ltd on behalf of the symposium organisers.

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Background to the symposium



The Australian Curriculum Studies Association (ACSA) conducted a major national forum in February 2006 where key curriculum decision makers and stakeholders had the opportunity to:

- ▶ analyse and discuss recent reports which have serious implications for curriculum in Australia, including *Benchmarking Australian Primary Curricula*, the *Comparison of Year 12 Pre-tertiary Mathematics Subjects in Australia 2004–05* and *Teaching Reading — National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy*, with a focus on the research on which these studies were based and an examination of their findings; and
- ▶ exchange views about the directions in which the current national agenda is moving and then explore strategies for ongoing collaboration to ensure quality initiatives and responses to national curriculum issues.

Put simply, the forum provided an important opportunity for key national and state-based curriculum decision makers to share perspectives and consider responses to an agenda that is changing rapidly across Australia as a whole.

It was agreed at the time this should be the start of an ongoing conversation and that ACSA would convene another symposium in August 2006 to further explore the emerging new stage in approaches to national curriculum work.

This Approaches to National Curriculum Work follow up symposium specifically was designed to enable earlier forum participants to reconvene together with expanded numbers of leaders from curriculum and assessment authorities, system and sector authorities, peak professional bodies and key agencies to:

- ▶ be updated on developments in recent initiatives related to national curriculum work;
- ▶ further explore and sharpen their understanding of what is meant by approaches to national curriculum work;
- ▶ identify key issues for states, territories and national agencies; and
- ▶ suggest strategies for promoting productive discussion and action in relation to approaches to national curriculum work between all stakeholders.

The starting point for discussion in this context, as agreed at the earlier forum, was the need for any approaches to clearly translate into achieving excellence and equity in student learning outcomes.

The shape of the two day symposium reflected the four areas outlined above with stimulus presentations, panel sessions and a syndicate group approach used to actively engage those who were involved. Plenary sessions were used to process the dialogue and debate and, where appropriate, reach broad agreement amongst the range of stakeholders who participated. Individuals were approached to make contributions through the two days in the form of brief statements, panel contributions and plenary session reflections.

The purpose of this report

The purpose of this report is to provide symposium participants and other interested parties with a synthesis of the outcomes of the symposium, drawn from input provided and the facilitated discussion which ensued.

The report takes the form of a short summary of the main input and the range of participant views expressed, along with points of agreement noted for action beyond the symposium itself.

It also is intended to distribute this record of proceedings and shared positions that emerged to key decision making groups participating in the symposium and communicate them in an appropriate form to Ministers of Education and Chief Executives, federal, state and territory, thereby helping to inform the ongoing deliberations at AESOC and MCEETYA.

Major outcomes of the symposium



Joint symposium chairs Tony Mackay (President, ACSA and Director, Centre for Strategic Education) and Professor Alan Reid (Executive Member, ACSA and Professor of Education, University of South Australia) welcomed participants and set the scene, purpose and intended outcomes for the ensuing two days.

In his role as symposium facilitator, Mackay explained how the ‘spirit of the gathering’ was intended as ‘an open exchange’ which recognised the roles and responsibilities participants hold, but also ‘freed up by the fact we are not seeking to come to a formal position to promote’. That said, he indicated the symposium did want to identify any key messages which ought be communicated within and beyond the education community.

The February forum, he explained, brought together the ‘most senior people working in the curriculum field to have a conversation about the national curriculum agenda and resulted in the National Approaches to Curriculum Reform report. That forum also called for this reprise to consider in depth ‘where we are now, with a view to sharpening up our understanding of what is happening and our collective views on the most productive strategies to encourage ongoing debate and dialogue’.

The organisers’ hope was that by the end of day two, they would have a set of messages which convey the outcomes of the gathering, and a sense of how best to progress these within the various states and territories and to MCEETYA and AESCO as well. What is more, these shared messages should, he concluded, ‘embody a common language that can influence the broader media and community debate’.

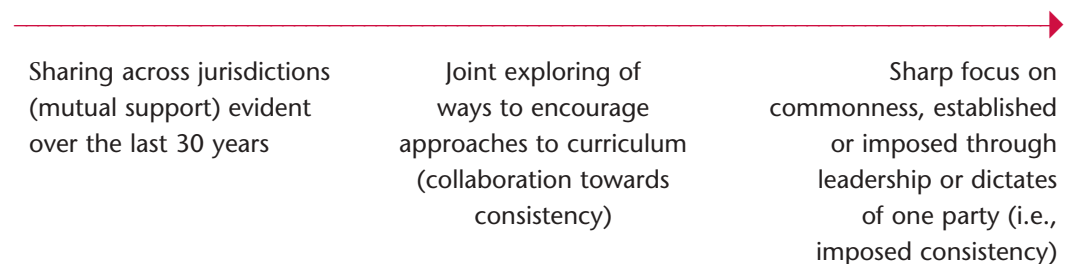
Approaches to National Curriculum Work

A panel of participants comprising Alan Reid, Sue Willis (President, Australian Council of Deans of Education), Roy Martin (Research Officer, Australian Education Union), Thelma Perso (Director of Curriculum, Education Queensland) and Janet Keightley (Chief Executive, Senior Secondary Assessment Board of SA) addressed the twin questions of:

- ▶ what do we mean by approaches to National Curriculum Work?; and
- ▶ what are the current and emerging approaches to National Curriculum Work?



Providing an individual perspective on the two questions to contribute to ‘common understandings in relation to national curriculum work’, Reid suggested that at one level it’s ‘about curriculum work involving all jurisdictions’, but at another it involves ‘a question about the nature of that work’. For him, it best can be seen in terms of a continuum from:



At any point in time, he explained, we can see examples of these points and they interweave, but at the moment there is ‘a real focus on the right hand end’.

Whilst Reid has ‘a passion for national approaches to curriculum’, they ought conform in his view to a set of criteria for effective national curriculum which they currently do not do as evidenced by the experience of the National History Summit. He has, in this context, three particular concerns.

First, we still do not have ‘a well-articulated rationale for national curriculum work related to Australia in the global society and the challenges of the modern world’. It is, he argued, the ‘reference point against which to make judgments about the sort of curriculum we want and work about it’.

Second, there is ‘a lack of a coherent view of curriculum related to the rationale’. Rather, there exists a range of disparate, unconnected projects.

And third, there is a ‘lack of any real involvement by educators who will develop and implement curriculum initiatives’. The History Summit is ‘a classic case in point’ where the issue was selected by the Prime Minister and Minister on the assertion of ‘some not necessarily well-grounded evidence’, with a summit of one day that included only three teachers and culminated in a recommendation for Australian History to be a stand alone compulsory subject in Years 9 and 10. ‘It lacked any connection to learning and curriculum theory and practice, and the ongoing debate in schools’.

All this for Reid ‘tugs against a productive approach to national curriculum work’. So educators have to ‘enunciate a view about education in the 21st century and engage with debate about that’. This especially is important when ‘we have a conservative backlash in the media which is really pushing us back to fixed syllabuses and a didactic curriculum which conservative government forces are helping to promote’.

This conservative backlash in his view is ‘unproductive at a time when retention is rising and the boundaries of knowledge increasingly are blurred, and the environment for which we prepare students is undergoing rapid and constant change’.

This symposium, he concluded, is the sort of forum to challenge this by identifying the type of national curriculum we favour and the reasons that sit behind it.

Responding to a clarifying question from the floor about whether narrowing necessarily is going back, Reid explained it ‘depends on what you mean by narrowing down’. A shift back to limited syllabuses and exams would, for instance, be going back in his view. Narrowing down in terms of clearing out some ‘curriculum undergrowth’ by contrast ‘would be no bad thing provided it is based on a strong curriculum rationale’.



Willis indicated she is in something of ‘a dilemma’ because of a state of flux in her own thinking. Having been a strong supporter of national curriculum work the question for her now is, ‘do we have approaches to national curriculum work or national approaches to curriculum?’

In the February forum she indicated she believed that ‘the states are both too small and too big to be the focus of curriculum work’. While remaining committed the notion of committing ourselves to a set of common high level expectations (outcomes), she does not believe that this is best achieved by uniformity of curriculum or that consistency is ‘naturally’ a good thing. Curriculum ought to be adapted to context and circumstance.

However, ‘when you have huge resources at the state level going to curriculum development, you can’t have those resources going into local curriculum development’. Those aspects of curriculum development that can reasonably be done at a large state level can probably also be done at a national level, releasing the resources needed to nuance curriculum to meet the needs of particular children in particular circumstances and communities.

Having said this, there also is a sense in which ‘I believe that states currently are very significant because they have the capacity and intellectual clout, if they choose to use it, to stand up and be counted on a range of major curriculum issues’.

In talking about a national approach, she noted, we have to clarify if we mean ‘centralised or federal’, since they are different, with the result people mean different things. The Deans she represents, for example, support national accreditation of teacher education courses, but recently have been ‘disconcerted’ to find this support has been interpreted as support for a centralised approach run by the Commonwealth, which is not quite the same as a collaborative approach run collectively by the states and territories.

This in turn, for her, raises the issue of consistency. ‘We assume a goal of national curriculum work is consistency. But I assume that nationally we ought to be able to say these are the principles that guide our curriculum work, and the frameworks for content, and so long as we are consistent with that, we don’t care about the details’. This reflects the fact she wants diversity and for people to be able to be different from each other. And she would rather that this nuancing of curriculum occurred locally but, in the absence of that, if uniformity and control is the goal ‘we need the states to protect us from the sort of consistency I fear’.

In other words, she concluded, ‘it’s a reframed view brought on by circumstances and the way the Commonwealth is behaving at the moment’.

Given the moment she described, Mackay asked by way of clarification, and the ‘idiosyncratic nature of an imposed central position you seem to see, are you effectively seeing the states and territories as mediators of the debate, but in the context you want to see difference driven as far as possible to the local level?’

Whilst agreeing with this outline in broad terms, an important contextual factor that must be acknowledged, she noted in response, is the relative smallness of the Australian population, which means we may not have the capacity needed at the local level; and hence we have to collaborate.



Picking up Reid’s reference to a conservative backlash as the ‘issue most framing the agenda at the moment’, Martin asked whether the national curriculum debate as engendered by the Australian government is the means or end of this?’ Particularly as state and territory elections come around we are, he argued, seeing greater evidence of the backlash in policies of the conservative parties at state and territory levels.

The most concerning aspect of the current debate in his view is that it’s about creating ‘segregated schools rather than curriculum’ to ensure ‘a supply of service workers who will get only a basic education whilst the intended knowledge workers will get the broad, liberal education to which all should be entitled’. It is reflected in part in the public-private education debate, but also in the growing selectivity within the public sector and the ‘residualisation’ that results.

His own reading of where we need to go in future is towards more of ‘an interdisciplinary approach rather than a focus on single subjects such as history’.

The problem with the current debate is that it ‘privileges certain groups within teaching and is, as a consequence, very divisive’.

In the end, though, ‘the debate from the Federal Government’s perspective is not about the curriculum, but who controls schools’ reflecting the existence of Labor governments in all of the states and territories. If we are to support a debate about national curriculum, he would seek to ask some key questions surrounding it all — such questions as:

- ▶ Is it the best way to defend the gains we have made?
- ▶ Will it move us forward towards a better curriculum?

The real difficulty in Martin’s view about the current curriculum and the way it has developed is that ‘very few people feel committed to it as a whole’. Teachers, he suggested, have had ‘limited involvement’ in its development which in turn limits their support for it. ‘We have become a soft target for the backlash’. In part this lies in the ‘growing gap between teachers and their bureaucracy’, with the result the current curriculum is perceived as ‘imposed and bureaucratic’ and the concern is that a national curriculum will make this worse and remove it further still from the classroom.

Curricula around the country are in something of a state of transition which in turn raises the question of ‘which curriculum are we to defend’; which he illustrated with reference to Tasmania and Western Australia.

How imperative he asked is a national curriculum and, in response, indicated agreement with Reid and Willis’s views that ‘the claims for a national curriculum are quite exaggerated in the absence of a clear educational rationale’. That said, he is not necessarily opposed to a national curriculum, and certainly does not believe that retreating into state and territory rights is a viable response. Rather, he sees a need to move towards it ‘rationally and steadily with a recognition of the history and culture reflected in the different curricula the states and territories have’. It also has to allow for flexibility and not be about consistency and conformity per se.

For his support, a national curriculum debate therefore must:

- ▶ be based on the learning needs of students in the 21st century;
- ▶ be about the best of curriculum;
- ▶ re-engage teachers;
- ▶ have a process that is slow enough to be done properly;
- ▶ acknowledge where each state and territory comes from and wants to go;
- ▶ be about scaffolding and skills rather than rigid content;
- ▶ be flexible and allow for innovation;
- ▶ have high expectations of its students and levels of teacher trust; and
- ▶ be about the nature of the curriculum.



Speaking as a departmental bureaucrat, Perso indicated the relevant political rationale relates to quadrennial funding which means ‘we can’t exercise power in the way that Sue Willis might want, except when we can be sure that all states and territories will act in the same way’.

It all is about politics and the influence of parents, lobby groups and media hype that sells papers as evidenced by the experiences of Tasmania and Western Australia. She therefore categorises national curriculum consistency in terms of:

- ▶ what we all would agree we should be consistent about (e.g., values, studies of Asia, etc.) and
- ▶ areas where ‘we need to be more cautious ... the high stakes areas of English, Maths, etc. and the work around the ACE at the top end’ where the ‘hype’ is more marked.

There is, she noted, a ‘high desire’ around the states and territories for national consistency and collaboration. Around the second group of subject areas, though, there is more concern because of the links to testing and accountability and their implications for schools on the one hand, and on the other, the time constraints that lead to outcomes ‘which are not of the quality we need’.

National consistency in her view is ‘desirable provided we have the time frame that delivers a quality product’. States and territories need to maintain their responsibility for the implementation of any products to ensure the necessary diversity exists, and the goal must be ‘to continue to improve outcomes for all students’.

It is, she concluded, ‘one thing to have a quality document, but we also need to address the teaching quality and professional development at the same time’.



Like Willis, Keightley is finding that, having worked at both the state and national levels where different degrees of freedom and flexibility applied, she tends to ‘oscillate and change’.

Four ‘threads’ she identified that ought influence our thinking in this context were:

- ▶ Locus of control — There is ‘a balancing act between central control and determination and local responsiveness, which operates at both the state and national level.’ And she observed it is ‘cyclical between very prescriptive, to local freedom to act, to something between the two’.
- ▶ Process — Curriculum in her view is ‘a community settlement ... a big compromise that we cannot avoid’. In South Australia, for instance, they are trying to give everyone a say and recognise that ‘you will never get a curriculum with universal support’; which she illustrated with reference to work where there has been high levels of collaboration, but compromise as a result. Imposition is an alternative to collaboration, where you get an expert group to identify ‘the best of the subject and tell us what it is about’. Whilst collaboration in her view makes ‘implementation easy’, imposition needs ‘extensive PD even to convince people it’s the way to go’.
- ▶ There always is a political overlay to the work of educators, which financial arrangements only intensify. ‘We cannot ignore this, but also need to resist being hijacked by it’. This requires educators to be focused on the students and ‘the main game of their learning which gives us integrity in the debate’.
- ▶ A need exists to sort out ‘what we mean by consistency and the degree of “identical-ness” that ought apply; especially given the fact that being identical often can lead to ‘subjects becoming dead’.

In some way all of this, she conceded, ‘is no different to normal; it just has a higher profile at the moment’ with, as facilitator Mackay added, ‘a lot to play for’.

Reid agreed at this point noting that ‘curriculum is one of the most contested areas of human activity you can get’. The difference now is the existence of ‘a concerted media attack against educators’ responses to the fact that kids are staying at school longer than ever before, driven by people who want a return to the sort of education they experienced themselves’. The Commonwealth government, he argued, is supporting this push and state and territory governments are ‘getting weak at the knees’. The challenge for the key curriculum decision makers at the symposium, he suggested, is to ‘become part of making a stand in the context, from my own point of view, of supporting a national approach’.

This for Mackay, in ending the panel session, meant there were four key issues that syndicate groups might consider in the context of the formal questions the panel had addressed:

- ▶ Reid’s continuum and whether or not it seems right;
- ▶ the need to be clear about the rationale, coherence and nature of our participation in the whole exercise;
- ▶ the role of states and territories; and
- ▶ the politics of curriculum and how we ought engage in that.



The same two panel stimulus questions and Mackay’s four points then were discussed by symposium syndicate groups prior to a facilitated plenary session to determine the key messages to emerge.

For group one the questions posed only raised more questions still, such as where is the debate to occur? What arena and whose voices? How do we provide the profession with a way to articulate its contribution and what agency helps this to occur? In some sense, though, their real focus was on ‘agency’ so we ‘don’t remain where we were in February, but someone actually picks up the issues with the involvement of the profession and takes them a stage further’.

The second group encompassed its thinking in the following four points:

- ▶ Reid’s continuum needs to be extended to include a point that focuses more on futures and equity issues and building a consensus around these.
- ▶ On the one hand they felt it good to see more public comment about curriculum, but this is counterbalanced by the fact that much of it is ‘unfair and destructive’.
- ▶ There is a need to avoid being ‘too simplistic about collaboration and imposition as though one or other is always bad or good’. It depends on the needs and circumstances of the time.
- ▶ What are we doing here and how do we progress?

The third group homed in on the national agenda and MCEETYA collaboration and, in particular, the need to construct a rationale for it that engages the profession — and ‘tying it to funding doesn’t work in that regard’. Whatever collaboration there is, they felt, depends on a ‘base model’ that allows for flexibility but does not require starting from scratch. Implementation needs to be ‘timely’ and again, imposing a ‘purse strings approach’ won’t work. The group’s feeling in this context, however, was that states and territories working in isolation leaves them open to being ‘picked off’, even when they may be moving in directions supported by research. The strength of the states and territories has been in setting a context where local flexibility can occur, albeit often requiring more resources and support to make it work. Change for teachers is hard and

time consuming, yet we are in a position where curriculum is portrayed as ‘simple and straight forward rather than contested and complex’. The difficulty being experienced in this context is getting the media air space to promote what can be a difficult view to express.

The last group returned to the issue of ‘a national approach to curriculum versus a national curriculum’, with most wanting to ‘foreground the former of the two’. What no-one wanted was the ‘imposition of consistency’ and, in that sense, the group’s deliberations tended to mirror the other three group reports with a particular focus on where are the teachers and also parents in the debate. This group specifically saw a role for ACSA in developing ‘a desired frame of reference for further discussions’ which outlines such components/parameters of a national approach to curriculum as:

- ▶ Process — expert or collaborative?
- ▶ Locus of control — Commonwealth/state and territory departments/school?
- ▶ Impact on states/territories — flexible or not?
- ▶ Use of the outcomes — for accountability/funding/whatever?

It then would be possible to ‘put a button’ where ACSA and other organisations stand on each of these to constitute the basis for further discussion and negotiation that needs to occur.

Summing up the session, facilitator Mackay suggested that people present largely are ‘up for a national approach and we ought not be painted into a position of being seen to oppose it’. Reid’s continuum is ‘helpful’ in this regard, particularly if it is extended as the second group suggested in terms of developing a common language for the debate. There is in this context a need to clarify the notions of collaboration and imposition and, in particular, the contested nature of the territory. One step forward that could be made, beyond exercising participants’ individual influence at various levels, is to develop a sort of guide, or ‘rules of engagement’ that could inform and help shape the debate and how it best can be progressed.

Key developments in National Curriculum Work

Symposium participants were provided with an update on a range of key developments in National Curriculum Work by Noel Simpson (Branch Manager, Quality Schooling Branch, Department of Education, Science and Training) and Di Kerr (Curriculum Advisor, Le@rning Federation).

Simpson’s own participation in the forum makes a point, he felt, about the agenda itself as did the appearance earlier in the morning in the audience of the Minister’s schools adviser at this ACSA event. That said, he indicated the views he then went on to express were entirely personal and needed to be taken in that light.

We now are, he argued, entering ‘a new era in terms of school curriculum nationally’. We are at the beginning of it and its shape is not yet clear, ‘but it is new’. The evidence for this assertion, he suggested, lies in, for instance, the Statements of Learning that Kerr later outlined — ‘not the fact we have them, but the decisions by Ministers that they will be implemented across Australia for all kids at the end of next year’. This time around ‘we have got to national implementation in a way we haven’t previously achieved’. What is more, he noted, the initiative came from state and territory ministers, not the Commonwealth, though the Australian government did then set a date under funding

arrangements for the statements to be completed and implemented which shows 'it all is being worked through rather than being clear, but also that it's a process the profession could seize the opportunity to lead'.

One of the dilemmas in this context is the need to gain eight different jurisdictional signatures (or at MCEETYA nine) for things to proceed. That is why the Australian government sometimes does put deadlines on things which leads to the view that teachers do not have time to work it all through. And that is something in Simpson's view that 'the profession needs to assert'. That said, the statements of learning now are publicly available and one job that ACSA may have is to analyse them from a professional point of view.

What is true, he argued, is that the Australian government 'is playing a much more active role in relation to the direction of schooling'. It is part of this 'new model, with all the associated stumbles that inevitably will occur along the way'.

Simpson's own area in DEST is responsible for 'the whole of the curriculum, aside from literacy, and all teaching areas and issues as well'. This is new territory for a government that previously only saw itself as a funder, but now wants more of a say given it has become the biggest single provider of funding to schools.

Rather than seeing this as 'wrong', he argued, we need to accept that governments 'do only act if they have the support of the public as was the case with A to E reporting which, despite the controversy, they probably would win in a public debate'. It is something educators 'need to recognise'.

He does in this context believe a rationale for it all does exist, 'even if only partially articulated'. We live in an era of globalisation where national governments take seriously issues like education which are seen as 'essential to our wellbeing' and where we have to be mindful of our performance and what we achieve. 'That's the agenda driving much of this work which is compounded by politics of course, but is part of a trend line regardless of the party in power'.

It reflects the 'aspiration and idealistic notion of how well we are preparing our young people for the future in a globalised world'; and there are, he suggested, plenty of examples of work we are doing which clearly is focused on 'what's good for our kids', such as the national languages statement, the national statement on studies of Asia and others he outlined.

Certainly one example of the horizon he discussed is the move to common Year 12 standards across the country which, in the general public's view, 'would seem a pretty sensible idea'. And he urged in this context, that 'we ought be careful to ensure our views conform to what might be called good old common sense'.

It is, then, a new era in which the Commonwealth has recognised its funding gives it 'both the power and perhaps responsibility as well to influence the policy settings across the nation'. We could, he noted, 'be angry and resentful in response, or we can try to ignore it or just criticise'. But it is only through 'constructive engagement that we can improve things and make them work'.

The critical thing in this new era is the quality of decisions the Australian government makes, particularly since DEST, as the agency of that government, is becoming much more involved 'as responsibly as we can'.

In recent years federally, he concluded, ‘we have had a reasonably good track record’ in areas such as civics and citizenship education, values and the like. Work always occurs collaboratively with the key stakeholders and ‘it shows in the results’. And all that ‘leads us here, with a challenge to the education profession to define a quality education system for our kids and to determine how we develop it and communicate it to the public without the purity and nonsense we often have opted for in the past. We have a responsibility to produce curriculum frameworks that pass the common sense test’.



Asked by facilitator Tony Mackay whether in the ‘new era’ we are talking about a commitment at COAG to invest in human capital, Simpson indicated yes in a broad sense, but added ‘the devil is in the detail and that is why we have to constructively engage beyond just the education community itself’. The COAG agenda is ‘an acknowledgment of the importance of education and we then have to go in there and fight for our patch’.

In arguing for a rationale, Alan Reid interposed, he is seeking a justification for national approaches which he then asked Simpson to outline. In essence it centres, Simpson replied, on ‘how you prepare kids not just to be citizens of their local community and state, but also to be citizens of the nation and even the world ... It’s almost like a national responsibility’.

Noting that the initiative for the statements of learning came from the states and territories, Mackay suggested that national ‘doesn’t just mean the Australian government’, and Simpson agreed that in terms of MCEETYA it means the states and territories as well. ‘In relation to the statements it came from a consideration of why we all are reinventing the wheel in curriculum terms rather than benefiting from collaboration. But the politics over territory do become very complex indeed, which is why a new process for setting the agenda may need to be forged’.

Returning to Reid’s question about rationale, Sue Willis suggested ‘we need a whole picture and not just answers about bits. Why do we want a national approach and what would it comprise? Then you can relate various national projects to that framework’. The point, Simpson noted in response, is that ‘it’s not a pure model. It’s an imperfect start as we stagger into the new era. It’s also contested ground, but with the statements of learning we are starting to say what ought be common experiences all kids should be able to learn regardless of where they live’.

Taking this a stage further still, Lyn Yates (ACSA Executive Member) suggested that, ‘to the community the question may be the reverse to the one Alan Reid proposed’. Their question might be ‘why not have a national approach to things?’, which Simpson endorsed with reference to the overwhelmingly positive public response to the notion of an ACE because ‘the public cannot see why we have eight different frameworks across such a small population’.

‘And you also seem’, Mackay noted in moving to the next address, ‘to be calling for the profession to get on the front foot, rather than just responding to a so called conservative backlash being experienced; which may in part mean investing in really defining the rationale for a national curriculum approach’.



Before starting to outline the history and status of the statements of learning, Kerr pointed specifically to the need to include the work of the Learning Federation (TLF) in both this and other forums, particularly as TLF's work enters its third phase, indicating that 'it is the biggest curriculum project underway ... and it's an important dimension of national collaboration we should talk about much more'.

She then outlined for participants how we got to the point of MCEETYA approval for the statements of learning and their implementation across the nation as a whole.

Work to develop the statements of learning arose from Ministers of Education's concern at the 'lack of consistency in curriculum outcomes between systems' and the subsequent work they initiated in 2002 to develop options for 'how states can collaborate further' so consistency can be achieved.

This led them in July 2003 to endorse the development of Statements of Learning for the four curriculum domains of English, Mathematics, Civics and Citizenship, and Science to which they later added ICT.

The passing of the Schools Assistance (Learning Together — achievement through choice and opportunity) Act 2004 only added importance to the task since states now are required to implement the Statements either as part of their next curriculum review, if that occurs between 2006 and 2008, or before 1 January 2008. In addition, Kerr explained, a further accountability condition requires states to implement common testing standards by the same date, including common national tests in these five curriculum domains.

Ministers, she noted, may 'sign off' to say their curricula do 'implement' the Statements of Learning, with a possible added requirement that mapping would be provided to the Australian Government by 1 January 2008 as evidence, showing how the specific elements of the Statement are present in state or territory curriculum documents.

So, the Statements of Learning, Kerr explained, 'are intended for use by jurisdictions, not schools'. More specifically they are what she referred to as 'opportunities to learn' rather than 'learning achievements', for implementation within jurisdictional mandatory curriculum documents.

Each statement begins with an introduction which discusses the domain in terms of current curriculum documents in Australia and then is divided into two parts covering:

- ▶ Statements of Learning generally presented in prose under 'organiser headings'; and
- ▶ Professional Elaborations presented in dot point form, often with examples written in professional language almost always with the same organiser headings.

Both the Statements of Learning and their Professional Elaborations are presented in four sections, called 'year junctures' for the end of Year 3, the end of Year 5, the end of Year 7, and the end of Year 9.

The writing and consultation stages for the Statements of Learning was completed early in 2006 and Ministerial approval has been received so they now are in place.

She then provided the following example of the statements in practice with a focus on Civics and Citizenship Education with specific reference to Human Rights.

Unpacking the Statement organisers in terms of the year junctures she had outlined, she identified areas where Human Rights specifically is addressed; as embodied in the following table derived from her presentation.

The Civics and Citizenship Statement and Human Rights

Year juncture	Students have the opportunity to: (note all points are quotes from the Statement itself)	The 'big ideas' involved
Year 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ understand that rules have a key purpose in protecting people's rights ▶ develop an understanding of personal rights and responsibilities in familiar contexts ▶ define and exercise personal rights and responsibilities within a variety of contexts ▶ participate in positive local environmental or other civic action 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ rules protect rights ▶ students have rights which they have the opportunity to exercise ▶ personal rights go hand in glove with responsibilities
Year 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ reflect on and engage with values that are fundamental to a healthy democracy including freedom of speech ▶ consider whether laws and sanctions are fair and appropriate for all people in all situations ▶ know that the legal process plays an important role in protecting people's rights ▶ develop an understanding of their rights and responsibilities and engage with these within their school and community ▶ appreciate the right of others to be different, within the rule of law ▶ understand that some important concepts and civic terms in Australian democracy are legacies of past societies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ a democratic form of government connects with human rights ▶ the law and legal process can protect rights ▶ fair and unfair — notion of absolute rights ▶ some rights are connected to human diversity ▶ rights have come from past societies
Year 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ understand ways in which laws and courts protect democratic rights and freedoms ▶ consider the influence of international agreements on Australian law ▶ explore the civic values and rights and responsibilities of citizens in a democratic society ▶ discuss and engage with the rights and responsibilities of Australian citizens ▶ explore the responsibilities of global citizenship ▶ investigate the contribution of people who have helped achieve civil and political rights in Australia and around the world 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ there are democratic rights, freedoms and responsibilities ▶ the law and courts can protect democratic rights ▶ rights extend into the international sphere through international agreements ▶ people have worked for human rights in various places and times and their stories are worth knowing

continued over

Year juncture	Students have the opportunity to: (note all points are quotes from the Statement itself)	The 'big ideas' involved
Year 9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ explore concepts of justice and law including ... equality before the law, presumption of innocence, the right of appeal and restorative justice ▶ recognise that there are different types of law, such as statute and common law that protect people's rights ▶ evaluate the role that international organisations play in protecting human rights ▶ engage with and reflect on the rights and responsibilities associated with being a young adult in Australia ▶ investigate and participate in ways to prevent and counter acts of racism, prejudice and discrimination ▶ consider opportunities to take civic action on issues ▶ explore how and why civic and political rights ... have changed over time in Australia ▶ develop an understanding of ATSI peoples' pursuit of citizenship rights ▶ have an understanding of ... the achievement of civil and political rights in Australia 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ they have to take action to uphold the human rights of others ▶ international organisations can protect human rights ▶ human rights have changed and been gained in Australia over time ▶ the story of how Indigenous Australians gained citizenship must be known and understood

It all represents, she suggested, rich learning material indeed. And the implications of all this she noted in concluding her address, are that it:

- ▶ represents the first national agreement we have had about what is reasonable, challenging and appropriate for young Australians to have the chance to learn at four points in their schooling;
- ▶ raises the five domains covered to pre-eminent status, with the expectation they will impact on national test items in future;
- ▶ forms a common national core specifying content and actions;
- ▶ implies implementation in the classroom; and
- ▶ raises questions about entitlement to the opportunities to learn and about when the actual learning can reasonably be expected to have taken place.



As an approach to collaboration, Mackay noted in opening a brief question and answer session, it had a clear rationale, a defined collaborative process, and the product will be implemented by states and territories with a clear link to national testing. 'Is it a real, live model of effective national curriculum work?'

Clearly for Kerr it is, though she did note they would have liked more time. The states and territories, she explained, were '100% clear about what they were prepared to be consistent on and what not'. It also was managed by Curriculum Corporation which Ministers

specifically had established for that sort of work. Above all, though, 'it symbolises federalism where states and territories do develop their own curriculum documentation, but there are things which we all agree should consistently be included'.

What, Roy Martin asked, are the implications of the fact we chose to address five dimensions through this process, but deal with history through a summit? It's a case, according to Noel Simpson, where 'what is being played out is the changing dynamics of the new era'. The Australian government has realised it can exercise power over schooling and the question is about how that will be pursued. 'There is a struggle over power in relation to Australian schooling', which is why he, personally, sees a need for 'greater professional coherence to influence the process that is played out'.

We ought not forget in this context, Mark Howie (President, NSW English Teachers Association) cautioned, that 'many teachers perceive a lack of good faith at the governmental level whereby the Trojan horse of collaboration is being used to hide white anting by the political flack teachers receive'.

Janet Keightley wondered in relation to the statements of learning in particular, whether 'any of the Ministers around in 2002 think that what we have delivered meets the goals they had for national consistency at the time'. Beyond this, although the process may look good from our point of view, 'how much change will we see in curriculum documentation as a result and, if there is not much, what does it mean for what occurred?'

Taking the second of these questions first, Kerr indicated that she expects the amount of change to vary from 'huge to not much depending on where the state or territory is up to in its curriculum processes'. As for ministers, the current group certainly are 'satisfied' because they all have signed off, really 'for the very first time'. In that sense, 'it certainly is an approach to national curriculum work which we should consider'.

There are, according to Terry Woolley (Executive Director, Primary, Middle & Senior Secondary Services, Department of Education and Children's Services, SA), some 'unstated things here such as the cost to states and territories in human and financial terms which should be acknowledged if it is a process to be emulated'. There also is a need to be far more realistic about the time quality curriculum development takes and a concern also sits there for him at least, about the relationship of any national Statements of Learning to national testing agenda that may exist. 'Will it become part of a creeping agenda that the education sectors may not support?'

The question for Simpson is, whether 'the creeping agenda' is good or not. 'Why would you not link curriculum to assessment in this way?' But, Woolley added, 'while recognising the value of the question, the link was not there when the project first was put in place', to which Kerr added by noting that although the ministers 'have made clear the statements are for consistency, they also have asked about the connection between these two things'.

Invited to provide a word on the national languages statement as another example of a national process to consider, Woolley then outlined how it constituted a collaborative initiative from professional associations, out of a DEST-funded seminar, which resulted in a national statement that has had a 'smooth transition through MCEETYA' as a result. Whilst it is, in that sense, another model of collaborative national work it also, he pointed out, did require bureaucrats to put it before their ministers to help ensure they took it up. The point is, Simpson added, that 'bureaucrats and the professional associations can lead and we ought not be shy about that'.

Kathe Kirby (Executive Director, Asia Education Foundation) then gave some history of the national statement for engaging young people in the studies of Asia as yet another example to consider, and the way in which it filled a gap at the policy level. It involved a range of consultations and forums leading to Ministerial agreement, and it has made a profound difference to the status of people's commitment in the area.

And values, Simpson noted in closing the session, is 'another area where the journey has just begun, and which is being picked up by states and territories and within schools'.



Syndicate groups then considered relevant support, concerns/cautions and resistance associated with the initiatives outlined which were shared in a facilitated plenary session and are summarised in the following table.

Support	Concerns/cautions	Resist
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Work around assessment 'for' and 'as', as well as 'of' learning ▶ Assessment and accountability at the national level, but occurring in different ways (e.g., work samples across states, etc.) ▶ Investment in classroom implementation and not just documentation ▶ Time for teachers to learn to be highly effective teachers linked to standards ▶ Not imposing a curriculum model, but working collaboratively from states/territories and the profession up ▶ Common sense implementation rather than one size fits all ▶ A process picking up the full range of perspectives ▶ Time for it all to occur, including consultation and implementation ▶ A clear overarching rationale and how it fits with the broader agenda 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ The need for any model to have clarity around purpose ▶ The meaning of quality outcomes ▶ Location of it all in the broader agenda ▶ The automatic assumption that something developed nationally is accompanied by testing rather than assessment ▶ Things linked to terms of governments ▶ A lack of trust of teachers ▶ Consultation and implementation time frames ▶ The 'creeping opportunity agenda' — as different ministers and DGs appear, new agendas emerge ▶ Competitive submission models for funding ▶ Project overload and some of the silos apparent in bureaucracies ▶ The tendency for national attention to lead to narrow outcomes ▶ The timing of activities which negatively can affect the outcomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Statements automatically leading to national testing ▶ More and more products being developed leading to resource overload without the right process for implementation (i.e., professional learning) ▶ Standardisation of curriculum around the nation ▶ Anything being sought for just political purposes ▶ A plethora of more and more documents ▶ The use of external consultancies to the exclusion of the profession ▶ Contestation of submissions and accountability around these submissions ▶ Anything with detrimental or punitive affects on schools ▶ Change without a rationale or evidence base ▶ Anything that does not acknowledge diversity

continued opposite

Support	Concerns/cautions	Resist
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ A process for change that acknowledges best practice change with a framework for practitioner engagement ▶ Collaborative approaches to professional learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Resource impacts ▶ Depletion of expertise ▶ Change fatigue from bureaucracies ▶ Don't move forward with curriculum just from common content 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Arbitrary government positions without going through MCEETYA processes

Tony Mackay then ended the first day by indicating a small group would convert this table into a draft set of statements that may or may not then constitute the start of a framework that could serve as a checklist for making professional judgments about new initiatives on the landscape.

A national and international perspective

Bruce Wilson (Director, The Education Business) provided a keynote after dinner address which also served as something of a reflection on discussions through day one of the symposium, and then Tom Bentley (Executive Director, Policy and Cabinet, Department of Premier and Cabinet, Victoria and former Director of DEMOS in the UK) gave a brief response.



The challenge by the state Labor governments and some unions to the Federal Government's Work Choices industrial legislation which began on 4 May in the High Court are, according to Wilson, something which those of us in education ought to be watching closely.

'Why', he rhetorically asked 'does a court case about industrial legislation have much bearing on school education?' The answer, he went on to suggest, lies in 'what the case reveals about the strategy being adopted by the Australian government at this interesting time in history. It suggests that the government wants to extend its influence into new areas, is prepared to take a tough line to achieve the extension and isn't worried about constitutional limitations. If you put those three items together in areas like education and health, you could realistically expect a Commonwealth move in to invade those areas.'

So is there any evidence that this is what is happening? Certainly Wilson thinks there is. The Australian government, he noted, 'is moving into a number of areas of education which have traditionally been seen as constitutionally owned by the states and territories: areas like the development of curriculum, certification and assessment. However, the change I am referring to is not something that occurred to our national government after it won control of the Senate in 2004. It is part of a secular change — a long term trend change — in Commonwealth–state relationships.'

A short history of the shift

History in this context is 'illuminating', illustrating as it does that this is part of a theme that has been evident for 20 years. 'What we are seeing now is the speeding up of a great historical process, a process which may lead to a profound shift in who controls schools in Australia.'

In the second half of the 1980s, Wilson explained, the then Federal Minister in a Labor Government, John Dawkins persuaded the states and territories to develop a common national framework for the curriculum, resulting in the development of statements and profiles in eight learning areas, published at the start of 1994. Although the final Ministerial meeting in Perth in 1993 involved an ambush by some newly elected conservative Ministers, that was nevertheless the first major effort to establish a national basis for curriculum in this country. It provided the impetus for outcomes-based education in Australia, and the documents were used in all states and territories, although in different ways.'

Then in 1994, Paul Keating initiated the review that led to the civics and citizenship program, which was continued and renamed Discovering Democracy when David Kemp became Education Minister in the first Howard Government.

In 1997, Minister Kemp put pressure on the states to be much more explicit about testing and reporting student literacy and numeracy, with the result 'we developed common national benchmarks in those areas for Years 3, 5 and 7, and we all agreed to assess and report against those benchmarks. More recently again education ministers decided in 2003 that Statements of Learning should be developed in English, mathematics, science and civics and citizenship for Years 3, 5, 7 and 9, to guide the future development of curriculum documents in all states and territories. And the list of areas was later expanded to include information and communication technologies.

Next, the Australian Government, 'as part of its quadrennial wrestling match with the states regarding funding', insisted among other things that national testing should replace state-based tests in literacy and numeracy and that student reports should include an A to E component.

In 2005 the national government initiated a study of the value of an Australian certificate of education. 'The steering committee for that project had very animated, productive discussions involving all the key players, and no-one ran out of the room sobbing. Yet some of the proposals discussed involved radical surgery to the current arrangements, although surgery which would take years to complete. The report in the end was very gradualist, suggesting a progressive approach, and no attempt to establish a national system of assessment for Years 11 and 12 at this stage.'

In parallel with this, Wilson observed, the national government has funded an independent comparative analysis of the content, curriculum and standards of state Year 12 syllabuses in English (including Literature), Australian History, Mathematics, Physics and Chemistry. 'I am not giving away any secrets when I say they are not doing this study because they think the states are all doing a great job and need positive reinforcement. And in the last few weeks we have seen the vigorous intervention by Prime Minister Howard and Minister Bishop in the debate about the teaching of Australian history.'

'The national government and its more aggressive supporters ... have been explicitly critical of curriculum content: the demise of the great writers and the adoption of relativist post-modern approaches in literature, Mickey Mouse offerings in the social sciences, black armband views and the stew of issues in history, dumbing down of the curriculum in mathematics and science, and so on. For half a century now we have seen culture wars around curriculum content, battles between progressives and conservatives about knowledge and curriculum content. For a long time, these battles have been like the weather: everyone talked about it, but no-one did anything. Now, the national government is doing something.'

The list of initiatives, he noted, is a long one. It includes the Commonwealth's initiative to fund the establishment and operation of 25 Australian Technical Colleges for students in Years 11 and 12 which, when examined in depth, starts to sound 'like a parallel national school system. No doubt it will bed down in a more collaborative form, but it is another sign that the national government wants to play a much more direct role in the management of education in this country.'

Meanwhile, again at the initiative of the national government, the states are working together on achieving common starting ages for children in all systems, and on changing other structural elements which presently vary around the country. And the Commonwealth established the literacy tutorial credit voucher initiative, which offered \$700 for students who were at risk in literacy achievement, as evidenced by their failure to achieve benchmarks in statewide tests.

A national system of curriculum, assessment and reporting

What Wilson thinks we are seeing here is 'evidence of a deep impatience among senior national politicians, and not only on the conservative side, about the inefficiencies in our national schooling system and what they see as lack of courage, vision, ambition and accountability at the state level. No doubt some at least of this is prompted by the fact that we have a dominant conservative national government which is in the strongest position of any government in recent history; and a set of state labor governments which also seem to be permanently welded in place ... So there are political opportunities available to both sides from a public fight.'

But it is a trend he believes is even larger and longer term than that implies. 'It is my view, and I think this view is conservative, that within 10 years we will have a national system for curriculum, assessment and reporting in Australia, essentially controlled centrally, with prescribed delegated management responsibilities being undertaken closer to the action. I think there is little doubt that we will have a national exit certificate. There will be national standards and accountability arrangements. While it will take longer, new school development will possibly become national, and it is not impossible that national employment arrangements will be established for school staff.'

If all of this happens, he suspects that 'the opportunities available to all schools will expand. I think a national system, especially if it is enacted by a conservative government, will be accompanied by a freeing up of constraints on schools. Schools will be encouraged to specialise, to experiment with different management and delivery models, to form partnerships with external agencies. Over the longer term, schools will be freer to adopt for-profit mechanisms, and government schools will be given the opportunity to take up degrees of independence from the constraints of government ownership. Entrepreneurial organisations will take on contracts for the outsourced management of current government schools, agreeing to meet specified deliverables: financial efficiencies, improved student learning outcomes, agreed enhancements and expansions to school programs and capital stock.'

Smart state governments, he suggested, will adopt a 'sophisticated approach and seek compromises' to achieve the kinds of reforms that benefit their children. The smartest of them will use it to shape the agenda and, he hopes, occasions such as this symposium will contribute to the debate.

And if all this happens, ‘we should judge it by its effect on student learning, rather than its adherence to ideology ... (since) for some people, the changes I am anticipating will sweep away what is now a deeply dysfunctional national model for the provision of education. To take curriculum alone, it is one area of Australian school education in which practice across the nation is still utterly incompatible.’

Each state and territory, he noted, has its own structures for developing, implementing, supporting and assessing curricula. ‘Characteristically, these responsibilities are divided between a statutory authority and an education department. Each jurisdiction adopts its own approach to the structure of the curriculum, while claiming to operate within a set of national goals which have been painfully negotiated twice. The goals do not impose unreasonable constraints on curriculum development. Indeed a comparison of the curriculum frameworks of any two states will reveal that adherence to the same goals can produce startling variety. These are the kinds of goals you want if the outcome you seek is complete autonomy with an illusion of commonality. The curriculum documents produced by, for example, Tasmania and New South Wales are demonstrably not of the same family. An independent observer might regard them as different species.’

Such variety, Wilson concluded, is ‘extraordinary in a relatively small nation with a mostly common language and a strong sense of a shared culture. It is difficult to imagine the basis for an argument that all this is productive. If a move towards more national approaches brings us reluctantly into the global world, that could be a great step forward’.



Having been present at the symposium in the afternoon, and heard Bruce Wilson’s address, Tom Bentley sought to briefly reflect on ‘doing’ curriculum reform from another perspective.

His own role in curriculum reform, he explained, came from a DEMOS project in 1995 related to young people and project-based community learning, which led to his participation in an advisory committee on the introduction of citizenship education and then, through contacts there, ultimately saw him becoming special adviser to the Secretary of State for Education and Employment at the age of 25.

The main lessons learned from this ‘brief and intense experience’ were more about ‘politics than the substance of curriculum reform’, which sometimes are ‘more about getting things done than the moral purpose of doing them’.

When working in government, he suggested, it seems that ‘time and unrestricted action are the most precious commodities you have’. The pressures on you ‘crowd out the sensible policy with rigour and shared support to which we aspire’. Instead we get ‘the politics of reform’ where you have to find the right TV personality and/or initiatives such as civics education have to overcome the obstruction of one or more key civil servants opposed to reform.

Bentley learned from all this that, whatever the intended substance of what you want to achieve, external factors always will intervene and can influence the outcomes. ‘It’s the interaction between the internal dynamics of our systems and the wider sources of social and political change that will produce the outcomes for young people’.

Like the UK in the late 1980s and early 1990s, Australia now may be experiencing a shift to standardisation, nationalisation and centralisation of control, in part in response to a hostile media and a demanding public, and hence we need to work out how best to respond.

Centralisation and nationalisation, he noted, are not 'predetermined' and don't have inevitable consequences. There is often 'huge variation' which he illustrated with reference to the software world as he concluded his remarks.

Microsoft and Linux, he argued, are examples of how we might think differently. Everyone knows the story of PCs and the emergence of the digital world with Microsoft at its centre. 'And everyone would complain about Microsoft's central position and how crap its software is.' What no-one predicted, however, was that the main competitor to the Microsoft world would be a 27 year old Finnish software developer who put software on the web and simply invited people to respond.

He actually developed a whole new 'open software' approach which could become a 'more powerful pedagogy that works in a globalised, corporate-dominated world'.

The moral of the story for Bentley is that we could live under any system, but wherever we live, there will be a 'smart, networked alternative' to be developed which is a 'moral alternative to a centralised approach'. While long term change may be all around us, there always is an alternative 'if we accept and share the responsibility to innovate'.

Messages from day one

Starting day two symposium facilitator Tony Mackay presented and went through the following 'very draft' guide to productive national approaches to curriculum work which a small group prepared out of day one.



A guide to productive national approaches to curriculum work

A guide to enable us to engage sensibly, intelligently and on a principled basis with government, the public and the profession.

1. Establish clear moral purpose and rationale

A powerful rationale for national approaches to curriculum work must:

- ▶ Address emerging challenges for learning in the 21st century
- ▶ Equip all young Australians with the capacity to thrive in 21st century Australia, our region and globally
- ▶ Address efficiency and effectiveness demands and requirements.

2. Promote a view of the curriculum consistent with the rationale

An adequate view of the curriculum must reveal coherence between its various parts and across the stages and phases of learning promoting:

- ▶ A depth of understanding and breadth of application
- ▶ High expectations and standards in learning outcomes for all young people.

3. *Follow a principled process for national approaches to curriculum work*

A principled process for undertaking national approaches to curriculum work must:

- ▶ Deeply engage teachers from conceptualisation to implementation
- ▶ Be rigorously research/evidence based
- ▶ Encompass multiple models of curriculum design and development
- ▶ Reflect legitimate democratic authority at multiple levels
- ▶ Reflect community expectations
- ▶ Allow adequate time for engagement and the production of quality outcomes.

4. *Ensure adequate resources and funding*

The level of resources and funding for national approaches to curriculum work must:

- ▶ Be sufficiently serious and adequate to match the ambition of the rationale and the process
- ▶ Be adequate to the needs of successful implementation
- ▶ Encompass the direct link to building professional learning and capacity.

5. *Demonstrate impact and outcomes*

The level of impact and the outcomes of productive national approaches to curriculum work must:

- ▶ Lead to deep and sustained levels of professional practice and professional accountability
- ▶ Integrate curriculum with assessment and reporting to enhance learning outcomes
- ▶ Produce improved learning outcomes that directly fulfil the moral purpose/rationale of excellence and equity
- ▶ Produce compelling evidence to meet the legitimate expectations of the profession, students, the public and governments
- ▶ Be accountable to the community.

It should be noted that, as a result of discussion of this draft through the day as reported in this document, ACSA has established a small group which will meet for a full day in October 2006, to:

- ▶ revise the draft guide in accordance with the feedback received from symposium working groups; and
- ▶ develop an initial action plan.

Both will be the subject of consultation with stakeholders as agreed at the conclusion of the symposium.

Key state, territory and national agency issues

A panel that included Terry Woolley, Debbie Efthymiades (General Manager, Teaching, Learning and Standards, Department of Employment, Education and Training, Northern Territory), Andrew Blair (President, Australian Secondary Principals Association) and Sue Mann (CEO, Curriculum Corporation) provided stimulus for participants on the key issues facing states, territories and national agencies in relation to national curriculum issues, prior to taking questions from the floor.



Taking a slightly different tack to Alan Reid on the first day, Efthymiades's continuum focused on 'commitment over compliance' and a perceived need to engender a culture of commitment in response as evident in the following table she presented on the differences between the two.

	Culture of compliance	Culture of commitment
Start with	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ rules and requirements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ commonly identified need ▶ common moral purpose
Consequent energy/focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ minimising the impact ▶ 'creative' interpretations ▶ avoidance ▶ meeting accountability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ investment ▶ sustained ▶ meeting the need
Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ superficial ▶ deficit ▶ complete autonomy with an illusion of commonality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ natural progression ▶ critical to investment ▶ matter of course

This compliance to commitment continuum, she noted, is not the same as one that spans centralised to localised in that each can exist at any structural level (national, state/territory, regional, school, classroom) depending on the degree of collaboration involved.

Defining her own role as a bureaucrat in terms of being 'an enabler', she then explained how she sees it as being to 'convert a culture of compliance as close as possible to a culture of commitment', which she illustrated with reference to how the Northern Territory is dealing with the current expectation that A to E reporting is used.

If this is put in a change management frame, at its most basic level, once the rationale involves 'requirement', rather than commitment related to a common moral purpose, then 'all is lost'. In that sense, one of the things that may need to be drawn out more clearly in the draft guide outlined above is the 'what's in it for me' factor for teachers and the action planning specific to the particular initiative to be pursued. That said, she indicated, what was presented is 'a very solid start on which we can build'.

She then in concluding outlined some specific factors relevant to the Northern Territory which causes them to view national activities as both 'opportunities and threats'; though all in the context of choosing to 'be at the table so our voice is heard and some influence can be maintained in order that the needs of our diverse student population continue to be met.



In discussion following Efthymiades' contribution, it was suggested that national work and initiatives are something of a mixed bag being done in different ways and responded to differently as a result.

State and territory authorities for example are, according to symposium participants with senior jurisdictional roles, fully aware of the COAG agenda and the consequent risk that MCEETYA could lose carriage of the education components of that; especially given timelines that arguably are more attuned to compliance than commitment to use the framework Efthymiades had advanced.

The window of opportunity for the education community to maintain some leadership, it was argued by some, is both narrow and quick and increasingly requires us to deliver on the expectations that governments, and increasingly premiers at the state/territory level rather than just education ministers, have. Certainly some positive achievements in this regard were noted, such as the Year 3, 5, 7 and 9 testing work which arose from a genuine, shared commitment to a common approach to gaining performance information on areas fundamental to the outcomes of schooling. Whilst the ACACA agencies for one would acknowledge there still is considerable legitimate discussion to have on such matters as content, marking, data analysis, reporting to parents and more, it's at least an area where states and territories can say they are partners at the table.

Similarly, having initially been cautious about developments regarding the ACE, since MCEETYA when ministers agreed to a cooperative approach to some of this work, it has become much easier to address. Through the AESOC a process will exist to facilitate comparability under the auspices of the various state and territory certificates. That said it will, as one participant pointed out, occur at the same time as Commonwealth work will proceed without state and territory involvement. And at some point, it all will have to come back in contact, especially as the states and territories do increasingly accept the need to move towards greater national consistency and move beyond the vulnerability they experience as a result of clinging to what one contributor referred to as 'minor differences shared by the education elites who invented them, rather than the communities in those jurisdictions'.

One of the more negative factors noted in this context is that it is very difficult in the national context and structures to deliver the sort of engagement envisaged by the draft guide presented earlier that day.

There sometimes exists, according to one senior curriculum and assessment agency participant, a 'naïve view expressed about epistemology' such as the way the History Summit operated where a certain element of the truth (about common experiences all students should have) exists, but how big it is then is a legitimate subject for debate. There is not a 'perfect' English, or Maths or History curriculum to lay down and the advantage of a federal system is that it provides, around a common core, a 'genuine opportunity for experimentation and innovation with some necessary benchmarking at its base. Creative difference', this participant added, 'is a source of how we advance, since it provides us with experience from which we all can learn'.

More specifically it was suggested, it is the dynamic between a common core and maintaining a generally collaborative federal system that enables us to progress. The tensions within that then are about ways in which some projects have been initiated. There are, participants felt, stark differences between something like the History Summit on the one hand, and the national approaches to literacy and numeracy testing on the other,

emphasising the urgency to take up the sort of principles and process outlined in the draft guide, and to ensure legitimate professional concerns are articulated and commitment, rather than compliance, results.



Speaking from ‘the heart rather than the head’ following this discussion, about his own experience of working on the national agenda from a state/territory perspective, one of the joys to which Woolley pointed was ‘the good will we all share towards achieving better outcomes for all young people’.

The key question he confronts in this context relates to Keightley’s discussion about the ‘locus of power’, which increasingly resides, he suggested, with AESOC and MCEETYA — ‘the things on their agenda tend to happen, which adds clarity to our work’. The challenge then is to make these decisions ‘operationally feasible and politically acceptable at the same time’. Sometimes that is easier than others, such as the Statements of Learning; and sometimes it’s harder, as is the case with national reporting obligations with grades A to E which ‘many people have some serious philosophical and educational problems with and where it’s also much harder to justify and operationalise’.

Woolley also feels that a tendency exists to ignore or discount the costs of all this national activity, and especially in terms of the ‘opportunities lost to be doing other things’ which, in the case of A to E, ‘I’d rather be doing and in which exists a greater sense of urgency to support teachers and schools’.

That said, there are opportunities ‘we can leverage out of unacceptable things such as the greater focus on teacher quality and engagement in the context of the curriculum framework in our state, even with A to E’ grades.

He then proceeded to outline the way in which he works with agencies such as MCEETYA and AESOC, with specific reference to the National Languages Statement which ‘will have significant national outcomes for students in our classrooms’. This, and engaging young Australians with Asia are, in his view, good examples of projects that have ‘come from the ground up’.

The caveats that he would tend to have around the AESOC/MCEETYA agenda are that:

- ▶ it isn’t easy and increasingly the COAG agenda is tending to move into the education debate;
- ▶ changes in personnel at those forums can lead to the ‘creeping opportunism’ to which reference was made on the previous day; and
- ▶ there is a tendency toward ‘uninformed enthusiasm and innocent activity’ setting up processes that result in people being required to take on too many things at once. Resources and time questions *and* answers must follow every good idea.

The values he uses to guide his own actions in this context centre on the obligation to prepare young people for the future which ‘we have seriously failed to sufficiently promote’. And he strongly advocates collaborative national curriculum development in this context, whilst acknowledging the constancy of tensions around timing that exist.

It is a context where he also cautioned against making sweeping international and other comparisons about student achievements because it often is ‘too simplistic and doesn’t take in a range of relevant factors, such as resourcing levels, cultural differences and different systemic circumstances’.

There are, he concluded, three ‘yawning gaps’ which nationally have not been addressed to any real extent:

- ▶ equity and access to high quality education, especially for Indigenous students and new arrivals to our country;
- ▶ a “futures orientation” in our national curriculum discussions which picks up such issues as sustainability, the environment, energy, global citizenship and more; and
- ▶ the lack of ‘common sense’ in our relationships between jurisdictions and the need for an essential level of ‘trust’ that must underpin a common sense approach to any national issue.



After briefly outlining the structure of Curriculum Corporation since it has taken on much of the joint national curriculum work, Mann noted that the Australian government’s agenda is ‘clear’ and it partly springs from a ‘lack of confidence in state and territory jurisdictions to deliver’, with associated attempts to bypass them and go direct to schools.

It is interesting in this context, that much of the national activity towards consistency was initiated by the state and territory ministers themselves. ‘One thing that looks peculiar to the public is the existence of what appear to be eight separate curricula in Australia’.

In this context there is, she suggested, a need to focus more on curriculum for the 21st century, especially as technology increasingly means that the lines between home and school are blurred. Over the five years of the Le@rning Federation, she noted, ‘It has been a challenge to engage curriculum people in discussions about technology and pedagogy.

Without denying the importance of localisation, in a population of only 20 million, she argued, ‘we can’t justify eight separate curricula. In the national consistency work, at times a lack of collective trust led to a tendency to competition rather than collaboration. The point is that, ‘we have to address the future needs, we often limit ourselves to what we already have in place.’

The Australian government’s ‘agenda’ therefore can either ‘engender a rear guard action or spur jurisdictions on to take the lead, look outside to other stakeholders, not just inwardly, and move forward as a result’.

That said, it’s Mann’s view that ‘we don’t really have a strategy to advance, as opposed to just limiting things to what we feel we can live with ... We need to overcome trivial differences and address the curriculum for the 21st century which includes a common core, pools experience, and draws on benchmarking and external support’.



Involvement for Blair all feels ‘very confused’. As the national president of a principals’ association and the Victorian president of one as well, ‘I find myself in a revolving door between a national and a Victorian view ... And resolving this is a difficult task’.

There is, he noted, much more active national intervention underway than in the past, and the ‘default position’ of some state and territory ministers is to ‘distrust’ this. So there is ‘this meander between the two to get traction in the debate’.

Much of what his national association does in this context is ‘problematic’ because it is not just looking at national consistency but at equity as well which increasingly is one of their key drivers. ‘When we sit around the table at a national level, we talk comparisons

of programs and it's clear there isn't equity of opportunity for all young people'. Part of his support for greater consistency is, therefore, to reflect that fact 'I value equity and it cannot be achieved at a state/territory level alone'.

He then outlined the way in which NQITSL was established to illustrate the significant task its successor, Teaching Australia, has within the profession and the challenges of effective professional engagement that result. As a board member of Teaching Australia he was, on the previous day, working on professional standards which only served to reveal how in order to involve the profession, the initiative has to be articulated to other existing work. 'You can't just drop in a new national initiative and approach and expect compliance, because it won't work'.

The Commonwealth also wants Teaching Australia to take over the accreditation of pre-service teacher education, but clearly AFTRAA has a view and a legitimate voice that has to be heard. And there were further examples of these sorts of tensions he outlined.

They are, he concluded, 'cases of confused spaces where state/territory and national activities with similar focuses are occurring in parallel and are not aligned'. It's both 'frustrating and unhelpful if we really want to make a difference' and move towards greater consistency so that equity can be enhanced.

There are lots of Australian government initiatives. 'As a profession, we have to be able to comment coherently on these and find ways in which states and territories can work collaboratively to ensure the profession outlives the politics of education that is involved'.



Before proceeding to the syndicate group session, Mackay did elicit the following brief contributions from other key players present on significant national work in which they are engaged.

- ▶ Ian Dalton (Executive Director, Australian Parents Council) echoed Andrew Blair's feelings of operating in a state of confusion 'which is not a pleasant place to be'. He doesn't think parents have particularly complicated expectations wanting, as they do, 'our kids to be educated in sound ways that adequately prepare them in the terms the draft guide outlines'. Education in Australia, he noted, is in a state of transition in relation to parent engagement, 'from a time when parents handed it all to schools to a time when they are taking a more active role'. Former Minister Nelson gave 'a greater imprimatur' to parents to do this, but in doing so, sometimes 'misused the parents' voice to support an agenda he wanted to pursue in any case'. That said, the overall reminder to parents of their role was generally very positive.
- ▶ Cheryl O'Connor (CEO, Australian College of Educators) noted that most professional associations are 'working under intense pressure because the agenda is very broad' and with only a small office 'professional associations are finding it hard to fully respond'. Operationalising the agenda 'is critical in terms of the impact it has on the classroom and on the stress levels of the professionals involved'. Responding to Mackay's observation that the AEU got itself on the front foot by producing a high quality vision of education for the future, O'Connor indicated that ACE is seeking to do exactly that, but 'no-one can do it alone — it's too big. That is why we have to collaborate in the ways we have discussed'.

- ▶ Pamela Macklin (Deputy CEO, Australian Council for Educational Research) acknowledged Mackay's categorisation of ACER as 'a huge player engaged in national work at every level which we have ignored somewhat to date' and added that, 'as an independent organisation it has the advantage it can work with everyone in the room and already does so to push the agenda forward'. In this context, she highlighted 'the commonality we observe around the country' in much of the work underway, and noted 'we get many very similar requests'. Perhaps the point is that, when we get down to what actually is happening on the ground, rather than some of the rhetoric that sits above it, we find 'more commonality than fragmentation' in areas such as professional learning and assessment where ACER has particular expertise. The area where ACER experiences more difficulty is in supporting systems and schools with teaching and learning resources because of the different language that often is used and which gets in the way of producing a truly national resource. 'We are proceeding with the work and producing valuable materials as a result, but a more common language certainly would help'. Then as a personal postscript, on the question of futures orientations that had been raised, she cited the absence of 'any Generation X and Generation Y participants in the room' as a problem needing to be addressed. She particularly pointed to a need to engage more with the members of these two generations in the profession since they commonly move on within five to ten years, and hence may well be more attuned to, if not even supportive of a measure of imposition when it is the alternative to consultation for three or four years which means they may not still be in the profession to see the results.

Making a final contribution to the discussion, Robert Randall (Director, Curriculum, Department of Education & Training, NSW) indicated he felt the draft guide seemed much like 'what we might have written in the 1980s and then again in the early 2000s'. What is it, he wanted to know, that's different this time, that 'lets us break out of where we are at by defining what is going to be taught to Australian students, to meet our Ministers' demands, so we can get on with the more important issue of how to teach well and to improve the quality of learning.'

That, Mackay responded, is part of the challenge for the last syndicate groups which he asked specifically to work on sharpening up the statement and then identify the strategies that will get us on the front foot.

Key strategies to promote productive discussion and action

Syndicates reported back on the key messages in relation to the draft guide presented at the start of the day and their suggestions for strategies that will take us forward in the national agenda debates.

Prior to inviting the reports though, symposium facilitator Tony Mackay outlined ACSA's 'place and view' in relation to the next stage of the process. ACSA, he explained, is 'both willing and able to take a leadership role in the next phase, without seeking to make any over-claims in relation to that'. More specifically, he indicated, 'we would like to act responsibly on this' and, consistent with views that already had emerged through the symposium, recognised that ACSA:

- ▶ has a responsibility to take up an invitation we received from Minister Bishop to brief her on discussions over the two symposia that have taken place; and
- ▶ should initiate an audience with AESOC/MCEETYA to indicate that serious work is underway.

Beyond this ACSA would want to take some responsibility to take this work forward and its bi-annual conference in July 2007 could be structured to take this into account. That said, he noted a desire to be guided by those in the room and the bodies from which they come; amongst other things because the resources required for substantial work of this kind means it is both desirably and of necessity, a collaborative task.



Group 1

The actual statement developed could, according to this group, be very significant. In a context where this group of stakeholders clearly wanted to express their willingness to work together on 'productive approaches' to national curriculum change, they specifically suggested that:

- ▶ point three of the statement should talk of the huge expectations that exist and encompass a more direct link to professional development; and
- ▶ the statement then should go direct to point five on impact and outcomes with the intention it all fit on a single page.

The group felt a need to 'dispense with edu-speak' when we 'go public' and suggested that, at that point, it may be possible to distil it all into a 'report card' for stakeholders to use to evaluate initiatives that are 'dropped on the national or even state/territory stage'. The purpose of this in the short term would be to enable us to react effectively as things emerge on the educational landscape. What is more, the concept of a report card could be both user-friendly and appealing to the media.

Thus, this group would convert the draft guide into a commitment to work together and a set of principles to be used as an evaluative (report card) tool. To achieve this, it would be necessary to 'model what we espouse' by putting the draft document to the various stakeholders for discussion and endorsement before going back to ACSA to be finalised. In the medium term, 'if we use a consistent set of principles as part of our work, we can start to have a consistent and principled view of how the work is done and the agenda, perhaps, can be used'.

Group 2

In addition to any set of principles, this group would like to see examples and explanations to provide a sort of 'further elaboration of the draft framework' which then can be endorsed as something stakeholders can use and also to test our own actions in various domains. In other words, 'let's live by it ourselves, but with examples to help us do this and move us beyond just parenthoods statements to actual worked examples of what good instances of national work would look like'. Then in criticising something like the national History Summit we could point to a preferred alternative approach.

In that sense, then, this group's reflections on the draft guide were more about particularising and explaining it than about proposed changes per se.

In terms of strategies the group felt that in the short term we ought focus on 'obvious things' such as this symposium report for stakeholders to use. Beyond that, in the medium and longer term, there is a need to develop guidelines for dealing with the media that 'someone should take the responsibility to produce ... (since) We all would like a guide, when finalised, to inform our work'.

Given the restrictions of time at the symposium, the group was keen to formulate a plan for action through a working group nominated by the symposium that should meet relatively soon and then forward its work for stakeholder consultation and response.

As part of any medium term plan, the group felt it important to get our issues on the AESOC/MCEETYA agenda, possibly through ACSA, in part by injecting a 'more proactive and positive voice' into the positions we expound.

In effect, then, the group was calling for symposium participants to become 'more skilled through the use of a toolkit that supports our more immediate responses, but also helps us to be more proactive over the medium and longer term'.

Group 3

At a general level the group felt the draft guide needed a 'very clear purpose statement up front' along the lines of establishing a framework for the rules of engagement with the Commonwealth, albeit more tactfully put. The statement then could draw up a set of protocols that parties seeking to collaborate would agree to accept. These suggestions were designed to ensure we are 'more specific about what we are seeking to achieve'.

Two more specific suggestions advanced were that the draft guide should be more explicit about the issue of equity in the section on resources and funding, and much clearer about its wording related to testing, reporting and accountability.

The development of any strategies for action, according to this group, should start with an examination of previous efforts that have failed to determine exactly why. Perhaps the key strategy advanced by the group in this context was to involve subject associations more in the development of national consistency work. The group supported ACSA going to AESOC and then MCEETYA with a finalised draft guide to seek their adoption of a similar set of protocols for national collaborative work.

ACSA was seen as an appropriate body to take the initiative in developing a 'major counter agenda' and, in the process, helping to create an authoritative group of people the media can approach. 'We need to get 20 years ahead and talk about where we need to be in 20 years time'. It was assumed in this context that ACSA would involve a wide range of players in the task as it has done to date.

Group 4

This group proposed two actions and associated strategies which complement the others proposed by earlier groups.

The group felt that ACSA should rework the draft guide so it addresses a range of purposes and audiences and is expressed in language that is accessible to the public as a whole. In addition, ACSA should develop a draft paper addressing the essentials of learning in the 21st century that links to the 'big issues' of both COAG and MCEETYA. It then would be possible for ACSA to facilitate a national summit on the draft paper and guide as a basis for developing an agreed set of principles for ongoing national collaborative curriculum work. Such principles also could constitute the sort of evaluative framework of which many symposium participants spoke. The proposed summit, it was noted, would need to have 'as wide a participation as possible to engage the public in the debate'.



Responding to these four reports Mackay first noted the strong measure of support amongst symposium participants for a productive national approach to curriculum work, as opposed to the partial and often misleading contributions that currently characterise much of the politicking and debate. State and territory representatives in particular foreshadowed their willingness to work collaboratively in more productive ways to advance positive national curriculum work.

He observed in this context that 'the time scale and sequencing constitute something of a crunch point'. At one level we are saying that 'work immediately is required on the guide and a set of principles to the point we get it right and feel we have captured something of sufficient authority to take to the AESOC/MCEETYA level'. In doing so, he acknowledged, there will be a need for a degree of elaboration and to test it with the profession and the public before bringing it back to a national summit where 'a public forward-agenda can be forged'.

If that process was formally constituted as a partnership between stakeholders that ACSA potentially could lead, then perhaps it 'could ratchet things up'. Certainly going to AESOC/MCEETYA earlier than this with something less formed, and the promise it will be fleshed out by the middle of next year, would risk them telling us to 'come back when it is done'.

So, he noted with general agreement from the floor, 'we need the full picture in place with a measure of public support before taking it to key decision making groups of that sort'.

AESOC, one participant indicated, rather than MCEETYA should be the focus and 'you need to go with something constructive about collaborative federalism for their interest to be gained'. In other words, put the desire to work with them in that sort of framework and make sure the principles are both clear and just the start of ongoing work.

If that in turn was precluded by a proper communication process through the stakeholders at the symposium would it, Mackay asked, be possible to actually prepare the AESOC members for such an approach? Mid 2007, a participant from the floor responded is, in that context, too late. The summit that sits at the centre of it needs to be early next year and focused on this issue alone rather than being part of a broader ACSA bi-annual conference.

From the public's point of view, another participant noted, the thing that will claim the territory for us is a clear view of education in the 21st century and the vision of learning we have. Getting this right is essential, another noted, to ensure we are not just portrayed as 'the same old forces trying to reclaim their ground'.

This also points to the importance for another participant of not neglecting point five in the draft guide (impact and outcomes) when going to AESOC, since 'that is what they will want to see'.

Summing up discussion to that point, and for that matter over the two days, Mackay observed that 'if we do the right level of preliminary work on the preamble, rationale and principles, and engage the stakeholders in this, then we can go to our respective DGs when we collectively assess the time is right and present them with an action plan that includes a summit as early as possible in 2007. Then a more elaborated statement can be developed by the middle of the year that could be translated into very clear guidelines that also can be used for the purposes of evaluation'.

It is not, he added, 'a linear process, but something more networked that is aimed at spreading influence along the way'. In that way, he concluded, we can begin to build on what many participants felt was a palpable sense of excitement at the symposium as a result of the progress it had made.



In this broad context, it was agreed as already foreshadowed earlier in this report that ACSA should establish a small group to meet for a full day in October 2006, to:

- ▶ revise the draft guide in accordance with the feedback received from symposium working groups; and
- ▶ develop an initial action plan.

The group already has been determined and, as indicated above, will schedule a meeting to conduct its work prior to submitting the redraft and plan to stakeholders for consultation.



Biographies

Co-chairs

Tony Mackay

Tony Mackay is the Director of the Centre for Strategic Education. Tony is also Senior Fellow, Centre for Applied Educational Research, Faculty of Education, The University of Melbourne; President of the Australian Curriculum Studies Association; Governing Council Member and Think Tank Chair, National College for School Leadership, UK; Consultant Advisor, Department for Education and Skills, UK; Chair, Innovation Unit Strategy Group, UK; OECD Senior Consultant, Schooling for Tomorrow Project; DEMOS International Associate; Visiting Fellow, London Leadership Centre; and Board Member of the International Congress for School Effectiveness and Improvement (ICSEI).

Tony is a Board Member of the Australian Council for Educational Research; a Committee Member of the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority; a Board Member of the University of Melbourne Faculty of Education; and a Governing Body Member of two Prep to Year 12 Melbourne Schools. Tony is a Fellow of the Australian College of Educators, a Fellow of the Australian Council for Educational Leaders, and a Fellow of the Victorian Division of the Institute of Public Administration, Australia.

Tony's consultancy work at school, state, national and international levels focuses on strategic thinking and facilitation for Government bodies, education agencies, think tanks, and school boards and leadership teams. It encompasses the areas of school leadership, school improvement, teacher professionalism, and curriculum and assessment policy.

Tony was recently named 2006 College Medallist by the Australian College of Educators (ACE) for his outstanding contribution to education in Australia.

Alan Reid

Alan Reid is Professor of Education at the University of South Australia. In 2004/05 he was appointed by the Minister of Education to be a member of a three person panel which reviewed the South Australian Certificate of Education (SACE); and he was also engaged by the South Australian Department of Education and Children's Services (DECS) to lead the development of a system-wide culture of research and inquiry. In 2002/03 he was the DEST National Research Fellow based in Canberra. Prior to that he was Dean of Education at the University of South Australia for three years.

Alan is involved in a range of national and state professional organisations including being on the national executive of the Australian Curriculum Studies Association; a designated key researcher in the Centre for Research in Education, Equity and Work; on the Editorial Boards of four international journals; and is a Fellow of the Australian College of Educators.

Alan's research interests include educational policy and curriculum change and he has published widely in these areas and gives many talks and papers to professional groups, nationally and internationally. In 2004, the Australian College of Educators awarded Alan the inaugural MacKillop Medal in recognition of his distinguished services to education.

Session 1 Panel

Sue Willis

Professor Sue Willis is the Dean of the Faculty of Education at Monash University and the President of the Australian Council of Deans of Education.

Following employment as a secondary school teacher and as an education officer, Sue was awarded the David Ross Research Fellowship to study at Purdue University and was admitted to the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in 1979. Since 1978, she has held academic posts at Purdue University, Ball State University, Murdoch University and Monash University working with primary and secondary teachers. The most senior of these positions have been her appointments as Dean of Education at Murdoch University from 1997–2000 and Dean of Education at Monash University from May 2000.

Sue's career has encompassed secondary and tertiary teaching, educational research, professional development and consultancy and policy work with government agencies including while on secondment from her university posts. She is currently the President of the Australian Council of Deans of Education, a member of the Board of the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA), is the chair of the Post Compulsory (Years 11 and 12) Curriculum and Assessment Committee of the VCAA and a member of the K–10 Committee. She has chaired the external review panel of two Australian Faculties of Education.

Sue's research and development work has included mathematics curriculum, professional judgement, assessment and accountability, and social justice and education. In the decade preceding her current appointment as Dean, her individual and collaborative research work attracted approximately \$1 million in research and development funding. As author or co-author, Sue's work has been published in eight books and monographs, more than 40 book chapters and refereed journal articles, 14 commissioned research reports and papers, and 35 non-refereed papers in professional journals, periodicals and conference proceedings. Sue has presented numerous conference and seminar papers at national and international conferences.

Roy Martin

Roy Martin has been a Federal Research Officer with the Australian Education Union where his major area of responsibility is Curriculum and Professional issues. Much of his work involves working with Branches and Associated Bodies to develop policy and responses to national issues. He coordinated the national committee that deals with these matters. This Committee recently produced the AEU Discussion paper *Educational Leadership and Teaching for the Twenty-First Century*.

Thelma Perso

Dr Thelma Perso was a classroom teacher of Mathematics in Western Australian schools for over 20 years, eight of which were as Head of Department. During this time she completed a Masters degree and PhD in Mathematics Education. In 1998 she became the Senior Curriculum Officer for Mathematics with the Department of Education in Western Australia. She received a Churchill Fellowship to investigate Indigenous numeracy in Canada and New Zealand in 2002 and this resulted in the publishing of a book on Improving Aboriginal Numeracy for international educators. In 2003 Thelma moved to

the ACT to take up a position as Curriculum Manager and is currently the Director of Curriculum Branch for Education Queensland. She has written and/or edited over 30 books for teachers on mathematics education, outcomes-focussed education and pedagogy, Algebra educational for students, and Working Mathematically as well as presented hundreds of teacher workshops and key-note addresses at conferences in Australia and overseas. Thelma is a life member of the Mathematical Association of Western Australia and is currently President of the Australian Association of Mathematics Teachers.

Janet Keightley

Dr Janet Keightley was born in South Australia and attended school in rural South Australia. She graduated from The University of Adelaide and Adelaide Teachers College and pursued her PhD studies at the University of London in the United Kingdom.

Janet has taught in the biological sciences at secondary and higher education levels in South Australia and in a College of Applied Arts and Technology in Canada. Her extensive curriculum and assessment experience has included research, development, policy and implementation aspects at a state and national level. Before being appointed to her current position, she held senior positions in Policy Development and Strategic Planning in South Australia.

While at the Senior Secondary Assessment Board of South Australia she has served a term as Chair of the Australasian Curriculum Assessment and Certification Authorities (ACACA) and as a member of the Executive of the International Association for Educational Assessment carried the responsibilities of Treasurer for six years.

Session 2 Panel

Noel Simpson

Noel Simpson is the manager of Quality Schooling for the Australian Government. He has worked for the Commonwealth Education Department since 1989. Prior to that he worked in adult and community education in Victoria. He has been the president of a national professional association of educators. Noel began his working life as a secondary school teacher.

Di Kerr

Di Kerr is currently Curriculum Advisor to the Le@rning Federation, a position held since 2001 and advises the ACT Department of Education and Training on its Curriculum Renewal process. Until February this year she was also Project Manager for the National Consistency in Curriculum Outcome, managing the development of Statements of Learning in four domains:

- ▶ Civics and citizenship
- ▶ Maths
- ▶ Science
- ▶ ICT

In a past life, Di was Executive Director in the WA Education Department 1994–2001.

Dinner speakers

Bruce Wilson

Bruce Wilson is Director of *The Education Business*. He has been involved as a key player in most national educational initiatives in the past two decades. He has specialised in curriculum policy and development, but has ranged widely across most educational functions. Bruce has recently advised all Australian governments on the implementation of national assessment and reporting in literacy and numeracy. He has conducted curriculum and policy reviews for most education agencies, including a review of the Northern Territory Curriculum Framework, work with the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority to develop a framework for reporting on student achievement within the new Victorian Essential Learning Standards and a review of the senior management structure of the Victorian Catholic Education Office.

Bruce was, until early 2005, Chief Executive of Curriculum Corporation, a company owned by all Australian Education Ministers, with a Board consisting of Chief Executives of Australian education systems. He led the company through major management changes, including the adoption of rigorous project management methodologies and commercial approaches to financial management. He established Curriculum Corporation as the key service agency to Australian education, and provider of strategic advice to Ministers of Education, the National Goals for Schooling, Literacy and Numeracy Benchmarks and Statements of Learning. Bruce was also a member of the Steering Committee for the Australian Certificate of Education project during 2005, and has been consistently involved in committees and steering groups at the highest levels in Australian education.

Bruce is a regular writer and speaker on educational matters. He has been influential in shaping national debate on issues including curriculum, assessment and reporting, pedagogy and online curriculum resources.

Tom Bentley

Tom Bentley is the Executive Director, Policy and Cabinet for the Department of Premier and Cabinet, Victoria. From 1999–2006 he was the Director of the London based think tank Demos. Prior to that he was a special adviser to David Blunkett MP, then Secretary of State for Education and Employment, where he worked on issues including school curriculum reform, social inclusion and creativity.

Tom's work focuses particularly on democracy and governance, public services and learning. Under Tom's leadership, Demos came to play a leading role in the formation of policy ideas and analysis of government reform, and became known as a 'do tank', providing consultancy and practical partnership alongside its more familiar forms of research and policy ideas.

His publications include: *Learning Beyond the Classroom: education for a changing world* (Routledge, 1998), *The Creative Age: knowledge and skills for a new economy* (Demos, 1999), *The Adaptive State: strategies for personalising the public realm* (Demos 2003), *Letting Go: complexity, individualism and the left* (Renewal, 2002), and *Everyday Democracy: why we get the politicians we deserve* (Demos, 2005).

Session 3 Panel

Terry Woolley

Terry Woolley has been a teacher, curriculum specialist and leader in the South Australian public school system for more than 35 years, 15 of those as Principal of three large and complex schools in South Australia. He holds educational, science, mathematics and postgraduate management qualifications and has teaching experiences in mathematics, science, physics and chemistry. He has served on a wide range of educational and advisory committees at state and national level. He was an executive member of both state and national principal associations for seven years and is a past president of the Australian Secondary Principals Association. He was an executive member of the International Confederation of Principals for three years. Terry is currently Executive Director, Primary, Middle and Senior Secondary Services, Office of Primary, Middle and Senior Secondary Services in the SA Department of Education and Children's Services and serves on a number of state and interstate advisory boards including the Asia Education Foundation. He is an accredited member of the Curriculum Corporation and Chair of the MCEETYA Working Committee on the Implementation of the National Languages Plan.

Debbie Efthymiades

Debbie Efthymiades is currently General Manager, Teaching, Learning & Standards Division within the Northern Territory Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET). She has fulfilled a range of roles within DEET including numeracy project officer, and GM Schools, Central Australia. Prior to arriving in the NT in 1998, Debbie lectured at the University of NSW in mathematics education and taught in a range of schools, predominantly in south-western Sydney in Cabramatta. Debbie is passionate about Territory kids being provided with the best possible life options through the best possible learning opportunities and celebrates the depth of commitment and expertise of Territory teachers in pursuing these ends. Her current interests are in evidence-based decision-making at all levels of education, the key role of school leaders in providing pedagogical leadership for improved outcomes and the critical interplay between student well-being and effective pedagogy in contributing to improved life options.

Andrew Blair

Andrew Blair is President of the Australian Secondary Principals Association (ASPA) and the Victorian Association of State Secondary Principals (VASSP).

Andrew has over 30 years experience working as a teacher and principal in Victoria. He was Principal of Mt Eliza Secondary College and Murrayville Secondary College and taught at Churchill Post Primary School, Maryvale High School and Derrinallum High School. He has also taught Graduate Diploma of Teaching/Visual Arts courses at Monash University.

Andrew is a Fellow of the Australian College of Educators (ACE) and the immediate past President of the Victorian Branch of ACE. He is also a Board Member and Director of the Education Foundation, a Board Member of the Asia Education Foundation and an Executive Member of the International Confederation of Principals.

Susan Mann

Susan Mann was appointed Chief Executive Officer of Curriculum Corporation in December 2004. Prior to this, Susan was Chief Operating Officer of The Le@rning Federation, a joint venture of Curriculum Corporation (CC) and *education.au ltd*. She had earlier held the position of Director-Curriculum Services at CC after joining the company from the Victorian Department of Education in 1994, where she held executive positions in the curriculum and strategic planning areas.

Susan also worked as Projects Director with the Victorian State Board of Education, at the Faculty of Education at Monash University, and was a member of a ministerial team for the establishment of the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Board (VCAB). Prior to these appointments, she was a teacher of English, languages and humanities in the secondary education sector for nine years. She has previously been a board member of VCAB and the Asia Education Foundation, and is currently a member of the Australia-Indonesia Institute Board.



Symposium program

Monday 28 August to Tuesday 29 August 2006, Airport Hilton Hotel, Melbourne

DAY 1

Monday 28 August 2006

9.30–10.00 am Foyer, Victorian Ballroom	Registration Arrival tea and coffee
10.00–10.15 am Victorian Ballroom	Co-chairs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Tony Mackay, President, Australian Curriculum Studies Association ▶ Alan Reid, Executive Member, Australian Curriculum Studies Association Introduction: Tony Mackay Welcome Setting the scene, purpose and intended outcomes of the Symposium
SESSION 1 10.15–11.30 am Victorian Ballroom	Stimulus questions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ What do we mean by approaches to National Curriculum Work? ▶ What are the current and emerging approaches to National Curriculum Work and associated issues and implications?
	PANEL Alan Reid, Professor of Education, University of South Australia Sue Willis, Australian Council of Deans of Education Roy Martin, Research Officer, Australian Education Union Thelma Perso, Director of Curriculum, EQ Janet Keightley, Chief Executive, Senior Secondary Assessment Board of SA Questions/discussion
11.30 am–12.30 pm Breakout rooms	SYNDICATE GROUPS Discussion of stimulus questions informed by panel discussion
12.30–1.00 pm Victorian Ballroom	WHOLE GROUP Key messages emerging from syndicate groups
1.00–2.00 pm	Lunch
SESSION 2 2.00–3.15 pm Victorian Ballroom	Update on key developments in National Curriculum Work — including Statements of Learning, Assessment and Reporting, Australian Certificate of Education
	PANEL Noel Simpson, Branch Manager, Quality Schooling Branch, DEST Di Kerr, Curriculum Consultant, Le@rning Federation
3.15–3.45 pm	Questions/discussion
3.45–4.00 pm	Afternoon tea
4.00–5.00 pm Breakout rooms	SYNDICATE GROUPS Consideration of approaches to National Curriculum Work: the initiatives in action — support, concerns, cautions, resistance
5.00–5.30 pm Victorian Ballroom	WHOLE GROUP Key messages emerging from syndicate groups

Day 1 continued overleaf

6.30 pm	Pre-dinner drinks
Victorian Ballroom	
7.00 pm	Dinner, with dinner speakers
Victorian Ballroom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Bruce Wilson, Director, The Education Business <i>National Curriculum Work: Where have we been and where are we going?</i> ▶ Tom Bentley, Executive Director, Policy and Cabinet, Department of Premier and Cabinet, Victoria. Formerly Director of London based think tank DEMOS <i>An International Perspective</i>

DAY 2 **Tuesday 29 August 2006**

8.30–9.00 am	Arrival tea and coffee
Foyer, Victorian Ballroom	
9.00–9.15 am	Introduction
Victorian Ballroom	Messages from Day 1: Tony Mackay
SESSION 3	Key issues for states, territories and national agencies in relation to national curriculum initiatives
9.15–10.30 am	
Victorian Ballroom	<p>STIMULUS PANEL</p> <p>Terry Woolley, Executive Director, Primary, Middle and Secondary Services, DECS, SA</p> <p>Debbie Efthymiades, General Manager, Teaching, Learning and Standards, DEET, NT</p> <p>Andrew Blair, President, Australian Secondary Principals Association</p> <p>Sue Mann, Chief Executive Officer, Curriculum Corporation</p>
10.30–11.00 am	Morning tea
11.00 am–12.30 pm	SYNDICATE GROUPS
Breakout rooms	<p>Given the key issues that have emerged identify:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ three enabling factors to strengthen approaches to national curriculum work ▶ three barriers to overcome or remove in order to enable productive approaches to national curriculum work ▶ key strategies for promoting productive discussion and action relating to approaches to national curriculum work. <p>Discussion to focus on both policy formulation and implementation at state, territory and national levels.</p>
12.30–1.30 pm	Lunch
SESSION 4	Share messages from syndicate groups
1.30–2.00 pm	
Victorian Ballroom	
2.00–2.30 pm	Round table discussion
Victorian Ballroom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Towards a cross syndicate consensus on strategies for promoting productive discussion and action
2.30–3.00 pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Agree on key messages emerging from the Symposium to be captured in the Symposium report ▶ Agree on communication strategy
Victorian Ballroom	
3.00 pm	Conclusion



Participants list

Andrew Blair	President	Australian Secondary Principals Association
Ted Brierley	Chairperson	APAPDC
Mark Brown	Director, Curriculum Framework	Curriculum Council (WA)
Lynne Bury	State Director, Victoria	Australian Literacy Educators Association
Pat Byrne	Federal President	Australian Education Union
Paul Carnemolla	President	Australian Science Teachers Association
Robyn Cations	Treasurer	National Education Forum
Rhonda Clarke	Senior Curriculum Officer	Office of the Board of Studies (NSW)
Tony Cook	General Manager, Student Learning Division	Department of Education & Training (VIC)
Ian Dalton	Executive Director	Australian Parents Council
Debbie Efthymiades	General Manager	Department of Employment, Education & Training (NT)
Wendy Engliss	Superintendent, Senior Years	Department of Education & Children's Services (SA)
Garry Everett	Assistant Director	Queensland Catholic Education Commission
John Firth	CEO	Victorian Curriculum & Assessment Authority
Lucy Fisher	Executive Member	Australian Curriculum Studies Association
Andrew Gohl	President	Australian Education Union (SA)
John Graham	Research Officer	Australian Education Union
Joan Holt	General Manager	Curriculum Corporation
Mark Howie	President	English Teachers Association of NSW
Mike Keely	President	State School Teachers Union of WA
Janet Keightley	Chief Executive	Senior Secondary Assessment Board of SA
Howard Kennedy	Acting Director, Curriculum	Office of the Board of Studies (NSW)
Di Kerr	Curriculum Advisor	The Le@rning Federation
Kathe Kirby	Executive Director	Asia Education Foundation
Helen Lambert	Vocational Education Advisor	Association of the Independent Schools of SA
Julie Lundberg	Assistant Secretary	Independent Education Union (SA)
Peter Luxton	Deputy Director	Queensland Studies Authority
Tony Mackay	President	Australian Curriculum Studies Association
Pamela Macklin	Deputy CEO (Professional Resources)	Australian Council for Educational Research
Robyn MacMillan	Quality Outcomes Section	Department of Education, Science & Training
Susan Mann	CEO	Curriculum Corporation
Colin Marsh	Executive Member	Australian Curriculum Studies Association

continued overleaf

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Kurt Mullane	Professional Learning Manager	Asia Education Foundation
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Karren Philp	President	Australian Association for the Teaching of English
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Alan Reid	Executive Member	Australian Curriculum Studies Association
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Jenene Rosser	Senior Education Officer	Independent Schools Queensland
Katherine Schoo	Executive Director	Australian Curriculum Studies Association
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Helen Strauch	Director, Curriculum & Assessment	Department of Education & Training (ACT)
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Christine Topfer	Vice-President	Australian Literacy Educators Association
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Barbara Waugh	Education Officer	Australian Curriculum Studies Association
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Trish Wilks	Director	Department of Education & Training (ACT)
Sue Willis	President	Australian Council of Deans of Education
Bruce Wilson	Director	The Education Business
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