Australia’s Curriculum Dilemmas: state cultures and the big issues
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Curriculum is a deceptively complicated topic

Australian curriculum scene 1975-2005
• frequent new curriculum policies
• ‘changing times’: look to future
• concerns about work in the 21st century
• concerns about values, citizenship, Australia and the global
• curriculum is governed and managed differently

NSW the premier state
“one of the best things we ever did […] was to introduce what we called distinction courses”

“we were aware what other states were doing – we thought they were wrong”
**SA social justice, teacher professionalism**

“curriculum [is really about] empowering teachers to do things, to do the work for the kids they are serving really”

“that was part of the brief we had: we have to make sure that this document actually reflects the constructivist view of knowledge in teaching”

**Queensland rural and radical?**

“most if not all of the senior syllabus have not been designed to be primarily preparation for university, although that is certainly one of their functions”

“what the system is trying to deal with now is to increase participation and retention by increasing the range of options of students”

**WA geography, teachers, politics**

“the Report was seen to be quite innovatory but then the culture of the schools stopped it from happening”

“high schools have in my experience always been if not impervious, then very strongly resistant to any changes that are about fundamentally altering how they operate”

**Tasmania size, demography, values**

“the first thing we had to do was a consultation with lots of different stakeholder groups about what do you think our values and purposes ought to be”

“we were trying to develop a curriculum that would lift the aspirations of all, not just some, and be common throughout the state”

**Victoria socially inclusive, but socially competitive**

“we had this kind of assessment to assist poorer families which was being ruthlessly exploited by the wealthy”

“what they learnt from other states and territories was to get a balance, between discipline based learning, personal development and social goals of schooling... what’s called the trans-disciplinary domain”

**The states and Australia’s curriculum dilemmas:**

1. Knowledge (and the purposes of schools)
2. Difference, diversity, inequalities
3. New Public Management