

**HTAA STATEMENT – NATIONAL CURRICULUM
National Conference, Brisbane, October 2008**



HTAA endorses the National Curriculum Board's current approach to the development of national History courses. We are very encouraged by the people engaged to oversee the writing of a History framework paper, by the genuinely collaborative nature of the process and by the lengthy consultation period that is envisaged before syllabuses are actually written.

We welcome the recognition of History as a discipline with its own integrity that, among other things, has an enormous amount to offer students in terms of essential knowledge and skills development in the areas of literacy, critical thinking, research, historical inquiry and analysis.

We are conscious that there are differing traditions and practices across the country and suggest that this might be catered for by allowing for some flexibility in the local implementation of courses.

History must engage and excite. New syllabuses must offer scope for a balanced approach to knowledge, skills development and the engagement of student interest. In this respect, very careful thought needs to be given to how much content is prescribed and how much time is allocated to each course. Short, tokenistic courses that require a checklist approach to content would be most counter-productive.

Syllabuses will need to allow for both teacher autonomy and some local flexibility in the selection of topics and themes. At the same time, a syllabus must be much more than a list of cryptic statements. There must be sufficient specification to support and direct teachers. A critical factor here will be links to resources.

The development of national courses offers the opportunity to rejuvenate the teaching of Australian history. At the same time, there needs to be some caution about a heavy-handed approach. While some aspects of Australian history need to remain distinct, consideration needs to be given to incorporating a more global perspective or to integrating approaches to Australian history into other topics.

National courses are to be developed across K-12:

- In the primary sector HTAA sees an opportunity to deal with the very significant issue of repetition, particularly with Australian history, by the effective sequencing of topics and skills development. Beyond this, we see the need to work very carefully with primary practitioners, especially on questions of pedagogy and the amount of discrete history that will be presented.
- In Years 7-10 HTAA sees most scope for the development of new and exciting courses.
- In the senior secondary years we recommend that History remains elective and suggest that existing courses in all states offer excellent models that could be adapted and offered nationally.

New national courses will only be successfully implemented if they are adequately supported with appropriate resources and professional learning programs.

Similarly, national courses must be supported by pre-service teacher education courses that offer year long History method units aimed at producing qualified specialist teachers of the discipline.

HTAA is very positive about the development of national History courses and the potential benefits for students, teachers and our discipline. However, there will be challenges. The release of the History framework paper and the ensuing consultative process will give rise to vigorous discussion and debate. This will only be productive if we can approach it with goodwill and avoid the polarisation that has dogged similar discussion in the past.

History Teachers' Association of Australia Executive