



## **Submission No 31**

### **Inquiry into Human Rights and Good Governance Education in the Asia Pacific Region**

**Organisation:** Department of Education, Science & Training

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Your Ref : HR2.1



COMMONWEALTH  
DEPARTMENT OF  
EDUCATION  
SCIENCE &  
TRAINING

Mr Adam Cunningham  
Secretary  
Human Rights Sub-Committee  
Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600



Dear Mr Cunningham

Thank you for your letter to Dr Jeff Harmer, inviting the Department of Education, Science and Training to make a submission to the inquiry into Human Rights and Good Governance Education in the Asia Pacific Region.

The Department has a number of programmes that contribute to this in Australia and in the Asia Pacific Region.

*Discovering Democracy*, the Commonwealth Government's civics and citizenship education programme, helps students to learn about Australia's democratic heritage and the values underpinning it, including equality, liberty, fairness, trust, mutual respect and social co-operation. *Discovering Democracy* also helps students to learn how the Australian system of government and law operates and to explore what it means to be an Australian today.

*Discovering Democracy* supports the **National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-first Century**, in particular the goal that students, when they leave school, should "be active and informed citizens with an understanding and appreciation of Australia's system of government and civic life".

All Education ministers have agreed to the development of student performance indicators for civics and citizenship education. Work on the development of these measures has proceeded through the Performance Monitoring and Reporting Taskforce (PMRT) of the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA). Assessment will be through a representative national sample survey of Year 6 and Year 10 students. The first survey will be held in 2004 with subsequent surveys at three-yearly intervals.

Following a consultation process and agreement between all education systems and sectors, two Key Performance Measures (KPMs) have been developed for civics and citizenship education:

- the first to focus on civic knowledge and understanding; and
- the second on citizenship participation skills and civic values.

Assessment items are being trialled in 2003 before the first national survey

*Discovering Democracy* was funded with \$18 million from 1997 to 2000 and a further \$13.6 million to extend the programme to June 2004 to help embed it in schools. Funding has been provided for:

- curriculum resources;
- teacher professional development; and
- national activities to support the programme.

The priority in the first quadrennium was curriculum resources; in the second quadrennium it is teacher professional development.

Curriculum resources made available free to every school in Australia to date are summarized below:

Year	Resource
1998	Primary and secondary <i>Discovering Democracy Kits</i> built around eighteen learning units, principally for students from mid-primary to Year 10 (supported by CD-ROMs, videos, posters and teacher guides). The learning units are organised around four themes: Who Rules?, Law and Rights, The Australian Nation and Citizens and Public Life.
1999	<i>Australian Readers</i> (two primary and two secondary collections of illustrated fictional and factual, historical and contemporary texts dealing with civics and citizenship themes)
2000	Resources to assist teachers with assessment and to promote student research activities
2001	<i>One Destiny! The Federation Story - the Centenary Edition</i> (a CD-ROM on Federation), and <i>Australians All!</i> (a big book for early primary students)
2002	<i>Our National Flag since 1901</i> (video and teachers notes for primary students), <i>Australia's Democracy: A Short History</i> (by John Hirst, a library resource for senior secondary students) and an additional <i>Reader: The Australian Reader Upper Secondary Collection</i> .

Further information including online versions of all eighteen learning units can be found on the *Discovering Democracy* website (<http://www.curriculum.edu.au/democracy/index.htm>).

*Discovering Democracy* has a primarily Australian focus, which includes a focus on how Australian national identity has changed over time and how it has come to encompass both cultural diversity and social cohesion. However, discovering democracy in Australian history and in local communities around Australia cannot be separated from exploring Australia's role in the region and the world. For example, the *Discovering Democracy* unit *Human Rights* helps students understand the United Nations Universal Declaration on Human Rights and struggles for democracy overseas. *Discovering Democracy through Research* helps students explore struggles for democracy overseas and examine support for such struggles in Australia. A teaching and learning module on global citizenship is being developed for the *Discovering Democracy* website. The *Readers* help stretch students' imaginations and their willingness to step into other people's shoes. They help to cultivate what the American philosopher Martha Nussbaum describes as the "powers of imagination that are essential to citizenship".

*Discovering Democracy* project officers in each State and Territory coordinate the delivery of professional development activities and school grants. These officers work with committees including representatives from Education departments and the Catholic and independent sectors as well as teacher and academic representatives. National activities include the *Discovering Democracy Achievement Awards*, *Celebrating Democracy Week*, national projects involving key stakeholders (particularly teachers and principals) and a national forum. The 2003 national forum (22-23 May) included an international dimension, drawing lessons from civics and citizenship education overseas.

The Civics Education Group (CEG) provides advice to the Minister and supervises the programme. It includes Dr John Hirst, (CEG Chair, Reader in History, Latrobe University); Professor Stuart Macintyre (Ernest Scott Professor of Australian History, University of Melbourne); Professor Greg Craven (Foundation Dean and Professor of Law, University of Notre Dame Australia) and Ms Susan Pascoe (Director, Catholic Education Office, Melbourne and Executive Director of Catholic Education Commission of Victoria), Professor Ross Fitzgerald (Adjunct Professor, School of Humanities, Griffith University; writer and broadcaster) and Mr Julian Dowse (Deputy Headmaster, Camberwell Grammar School). Ms Pascoe made a presentation on behalf of the Group at the *Dignity, Democracy, Equality* conference on human rights education in Canberra on 23 August 2002.

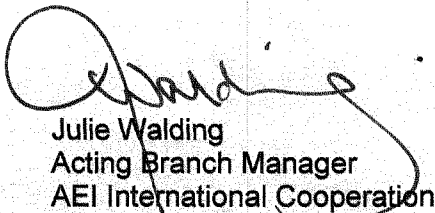
*Discovering Democracy* has encouraged the study of civic values like democracy, freedom, compassion for each other and respect for the rule of law, which are now being explored in schools across Australia. The Minister for Education, Science and Training, Dr Brendan Nelson, has recently taken this concern further by commissioning a national study promoting values education in Australian schools in July 2002.

The Commonwealth is investing over \$580,000 in the Values Education Study. This will enable schools to strengthen what they are already doing in values education area and to disseminate good practice examples. The final report from the study (due in June 2003) will develop a set of principles and a framework for improved values education in Australian schools. This report will also include the results from case studies in approximately 70 schools around the country and from research on what values are currently taught in Australian schools, how those values were developed and how that compares with the way values are embedded in school education in other countries. The national Values Education Study includes a focus on learning about civic values (eg in the information sent to schools inviting applications for action research case study grants). A number of the case studies have an explicit civics values focus. The national Values Education Study website (<http://www.curriculum.edu.au/values/>) provides further information.

The Department also contributed \$20,000 to the UNESCO Asia-Pacific Network for International Education and Values Education (APNIEVE) Regional Teacher Training Workshop held in Adelaide in 2002. The workshop provided the opportunity for thirty teachers from the Asia-Pacific region to share and learn from each other, and to demonstrate through presentations, experiential workshops and school visits, the progress made in Australia in the process of Values education for peace and intercultural understanding integrated within curricula.

If you require any further information, please contact Mr Christopher Lawson in AEI International Cooperation by phoning 6240 7192 or by email at [Christopher.Lawson@dest.gov.au](mailto:Christopher.Lawson@dest.gov.au).

Yours sincerely



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