



Australian Government

Department of Education, Science and Training

*Evaluation of the
Discovering
Democracy
Programme
2000-2003*

**A Report to the Australian Government Department of
Education, Science and Training, Canberra –
Executive Summary**

EREBUS CONSULTING PARTNERS

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Executive Summary

Introduction

The Australian Government's civics and citizenship education programme, *Discovering Democracy*, helps to prepare young people to become effective and responsible citizens and helps them to learn about the operation of the Australian system of government and law, to explore what it means to be an Australian today and learn about Australia's democratic heritage and the values underpinning it, including equality, liberty, fairness, trust, mutual respect and social co-operation.

Discovering Democracy supports the National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-first Century, which state, in part, 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 Commonwealth, State and Territory education ministers have now agreed to the development of student performance indicators for civics and citizenship education so student learning can be assessed and reported nationally on a regular basis.

Discovering Democracy was funded with \$18 million from 1997 to 2000 and, following an evaluation, a further \$13.6 million to extend the programme to June 2004 and help it become embedded in mainstream school curriculum. The main priority in the first quadrennium was curriculum resources; in the second quadrennium it is teacher professional development. The \$13.6 million funding to 2004 includes \$2.1 million for curriculum resources, \$7 million for teacher professional development and \$4.5 million for national activities.

The extended funding also supported a focus on the Centenary of Federation, Australian Multiculturalism and reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians (which has been provided through means such as the CD-ROM *One Destiny! The Federation Story - the Centenary Edition*, the *Australian Reader Upper Secondary Collection* and school showcases and case studies on the *Discovering Democracy* website. (<http://www.curriculum.edu.au/democracy/>).

Further details of the types of activities that have been funded by the programme during 2000-2003 are provided in the body of the report.

Objectives for this evaluation

The objective of this evaluation is to provide reliable quantitative and qualitative information on:

- the ways in which *Discovering Democracy* has influenced civics and citizenship education curriculum frameworks and developments across the country,
- the take-up of *Discovering Democracy* resources in schools (based on information collected from a representative survey of teachers),
- the effectiveness of *Discovering Democracy* teacher professional development in States and Territories

the effectiveness of *Discovering Democracy* national activities, and recommendations about possible future initiatives linking civics and citizenship education to values education, to history education, to Studies of Australia and to Studies of Asia.

Methodology

The methodology used for the evaluation of *Discovering Democracy 2000-2003* is similar to that used in the Evaluation of Phase 1 of the programme, in that it draws on multiple methods of data gathering including qualitative and quantitative components, to provide insights into the programme's operation and future directions. The previous methodology has been expanded to take account of the broader operational context within which *Discovering Democracy* now operates.

To address the evaluation outcomes, four principal forms of data-gathering have been employed:

- in-depth interviews with more than 60 key stakeholders;
- a national survey of teachers in primary and secondary schools in relation to resource uptake, and teaching and learning practices;
- analysis of documents, including curriculum frameworks and resource materials;
- a nationally-based series of 63 case studies in schools.

Further details of the data gathering instruments used, persons interviewed, schools contacted, and survey response are discussed in the body of the report.

Findings

The place of Civics and Citizenship in the curriculum

The evaluation considered the ways in which *Discovering Democracy* has been incorporated into the intended curriculum of civics and citizenship education around Australia. Given the commitment expressed in the National Goals of Schooling, it might be expected that all State and Territory departments of education would include civics and citizenship among their curriculum priorities. The detailed analysis shown in Appendix 4 illustrates the extent to which this has indeed occurred.

The evidence is clear that all States and Territories have provided avenues through which civics and citizenship can be incorporated into the intended curriculum during the compulsory years of schooling. Across all jurisdictions there is also a commitment, often with federal support, to provide resources to this area, including specially designed units of work for teachers and professional development modules.

There are many differences in the way that civics and citizenship is conceived, developed and implemented across the education jurisdictions, but there are also some strong similarities on matters of principle. All State and Territory authorities argue the need for students to be active citizens, critically informed, socially just and knowledgeable. There is also a strong commitment to those civic values (tolerance, balancing rights and responsibilities, respect for the common good, equity and social justice and being inclusive) that underpin our democratic way of life. In terms of the

pedagogy, there is also a common belief that learning should embrace a student-centred and constructivist approach.

There is strong evidence to suggest, through the websites and “linkages” documents, that *Discovering Democracy* has considerable relevance in supporting the approach to civics and citizenship adopted by the various jurisdictions. There are ample opportunities for using the materials in support of curriculum objectives throughout the compulsory years of schooling, not only in SOSE/HSIE but across the curriculum. No teacher or school should feel they are constrained in the use of the materials because there is no place in the curriculum to do so. In fact, as discussed below, not only has civics and citizenship (and elements of *Discovering Democracy*) a firm place in the curriculum, it would also appear to have a firm place in the extra-curriculum or co-curriculum of many schools. At best practice levels, the cultural practices of the school mirror the intended behavioural and attitudinal learning outcomes inherent in the national goals, which are in turn reflected in the *Discovering Democracy* materials.

In addition, at the July 2003 Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs meeting, all Australian Ministers for Education agreed to work towards nationally consistent curriculum outcomes in Civics and Citizenship (and in three other learning areas: English, Maths, and Science).

Curriculum Resources

Since its inception, the *Discovering Democracy* project has been strongly underpinned by sets of curriculum resources at both primary and secondary levels produced by the Curriculum Corporation. The materials generally relate to State and Territory curriculum frameworks and syllabuses for all levels of schooling and include print, audiovisual and electronic resources. More specifically, the materials include:

- Resource kits including teaching and learning units of work, supported by teacher reference books, interactive CD-ROMs for students, videos, posters and cards

- Six *Australian Readers* that include speeches, songs, paintings, cartoons, poetry and extracts from novels and plays grouped around civic themes. The *Readers* include *Australians All*, a ‘big book’ for lower primary that presents a story of a community working together to solve a problem, songs, poetry and a narrative account of Federation

- Assessment resources that are used in conjunction with the teaching and learning units

- Discovering Democracy through Research*, which helps students investigate civic issues

- A CD-ROM about Federation that includes a bank of primary sources, a slide show of eight themes and interactive activities for students on issues such as the process of Federation, the role of women, the Australian Constitution, matters for debate and of concern to the States and the attitude to and place of Indigenous Australians in Australian society at the time of Federation

- The *Discovering Democracy* website which includes all the teaching and learning units, information about *Discovering Democracy* activities, showcases of best practice and an integrated information resource on Australian parliaments: [*Parliament@Work*](#).

Interviews undertaken with schools and teachers across the nation about the value and efficacy of the nationally developed *Discovering Democracy* resources indicate a very

positive response. Teachers in particular have consistently highlighted the following features about the resources:

- The attractiveness of presentation
- The suitability for student learning and the related motivational features
- The appropriateness of the material for identified student groups
- The currency and relevance of topics covered for students
- The range of print, audiovisual and electronic resources available
- The practical examples of units of work
- The enduring nature of the kits

Indeed one head of Department of SOSE commented that the *Discovering Democracy* kit was the most useful set of materials in his 25 years of teaching.

Deciding which curriculum materials to use is one of the most important professional judgments that teachers make. Indeed the daily decisions that teachers make about which materials to use and how to use them largely determine what and how well students learn. Across the nation a trend is now emerging to combine the materials within the kit with resources that focus on current affairs that have particular relevance for students.

The almost universal response from those consulted during the evaluation was that further curriculum materials development at a national level was not required – there is more than enough material available already. Whatever is missing now in terms of linkages to State and Territory curriculum frameworks is recognised as being a responsibility of individual jurisdictions. There are two exceptions to this conclusion: firstly, a strong desire for the maintenance and development of the *Discovering Democracy* website was expressed, as a means of keeping a profile for the area and maintaining accessibility to emerging resources; and secondly, extending the focus of the materials into early childhood years.

Teacher’s perceptions of the relevance of the *Discovering Democracy* materials are reported in Table E1 below. All three areas were thought to be highly relevant, but particularly in relation to the way values are taught as part of Civics and Citizenship education.

Table E1: Perceived relevance of the knowledge, skills and values promoted in the *Discovering Democracy* package for teaching Civics and Citizenship

	Not relevant	Slightly Relevant	Relevant	Highly Relevant	Extremely Relevant
Knowledge	1.5	3.4	40.3	42.6	11.9
Skills	2.1	3.9	43.0	37.4	13.7
Values	1.6	3.1	35.2	38.1	22.7

Table E2 indicates how teachers are using *Discovering Democracy* materials. A relatively greater proportion of primary teachers make some use of the materials than secondary teachers. Of those using the materials, most frequently teachers had examined the

materials and had made some use of the materials. Teachers in just under one-half of the schools make regular use of the materials, but in only a relatively small proportion is it a well established part of the school's curriculum.

Table E2: How *Discovering Democracy* resources are currently used.

	Primary	Secondary	Total
N=	307	128	435
Not used at all	10.7	14.8	12.0
Some relevant teachers have examined the materials and used some of the units of work	41.7	46.1	43.0
Some relevant teachers regularly use the materials	20.5	20.2	20.5
Most relevant teachers make some use of the materials	19.5	13.3	17.7
The resources are a well-established part of the school's curriculum	7.5	5.5	6.9

Table E3 demonstrates that teachers perceive almost all of the *Discovering Democracy* material to be fairly useful. The units of work are still reported to be most useful, even though teachers now pick and choose from among the unit material in their teaching programmes. Teachers find the assessment resources to be less useful – a fact reflected by the level of practice in this area. While the website is reported to be very or moderately useful in the majority of schools responding to the survey, there remains a significant proportion of schools who make little use of this resource.

Table E3: Perceived usefulness of *Discovering Democracy* resource materials

	Very useful	Moderately useful	Little use	Not useful
Units of work	50.0	42.5	6.0	1.6
<i>Australian Readers</i>	36.5	44.1	15.1	4.3
Website	22.2	48.6	21.7	7.5
<i>Discovering Democracy through Research</i>	12.3	45.1	31.3	11.4
<i>Assessment Resources</i>	11.1	47.9	30.8	10.3
<i>A Guide to Government and Law in Australia</i> (teacher guide)	28.5	44.1	18.7	8.7
Others (CD-ROMs, Video, Posters and cards)	22.9	49.9	19.4	7.8

Effectiveness of professional development for *Discovering Democracy* 2000-2003

In each of the State and Territory jurisdictions, over the past three years the professional development of teachers has been a major component of the implementation of *Discovering Democracy*. Over this period, approaches and initiatives have been developed that respond to the growing appreciation of the fact that the dissemination of the initial *Discovering Democracy* kit and subsequent materials and the provision of ongoing support and updates, of themselves would always be insufficient to embed it in schools.

In each State and Territory the funding made available by the Australian Government has been used to establish a professional development officer position. In most instances this has been one full-time position, although in one populous state it has involved a team of three officers and in another, at one point in time a 0.5 time allocation. To support the implementation of *Discovering Democracy* and the professional development initiatives associated with it, State and Territory-based steering committees have been established. These committees are representative and cross-sectoral groups.

In broad terms, across the states and territories there have been two principal approaches to professional development to support *Discovering Democracy*. In some instances, the focus has been primarily on attempting to increase awareness of the materials, while in others greater priority has been given to more deeply embedding *Discovering Democracy* in a smaller number of schools. The relative balance of the approaches varies considerably across the States and Territories.

The evaluation of the work undertaken in the professional development component of *Discovering Democracy* indicates some areas of significant achievement. Through a variety of strategies, driven by different needs and contexts across states and territories, efforts have been made to use the available resources to reach as many teachers as possible and to build a base of awareness and understanding of the materials. However, in spite of the identified need to continue to broaden the base of awareness in schools, the evidence that either model has achieved significant and long-term impact is somewhat lacking. Awareness-raising of itself can achieve only relatively limited longer term goals. On the other hand, intensive work in only a few schools means that the vast majority of teachers and schools do not have access to the same depth of understanding as is possible to develop through action research-type models.

Table E4 below shows how schools responding to the survey rated the impact of professional development. Impact was greatest in improving teacher understanding and confidence. It was also credited with having a moderate amount of impact on teaching and learning practices, and on curriculum planning and organisation. This is not surprising given the fact that many of the materials were aimed at achieving this purpose, that is, they were designed as teacher reference material. Consistent with findings from other sources in this evaluation, impact was least in the area of assessment practices, although around one-half of the responding schools said that there had been a moderate or greater impact on student learning outcomes. Professional development also had fairly limited impact on school community understanding and involvement. There is a consistent pattern within the survey data

that illustrates the importance of professional development in supporting schools to use the *Discovering Democracy* materials effectively.

Table E4: Impact of professional development for *Discovering Democracy* on civics and citizenship education

	Great extent (%)	Moderate extent (%)	Little extent (%)	Not at all (%)	Don't know (%)
Curriculum planning and organisation	16.7	43.0	21.9	5.8	12.6
Teacher understanding and confidence	23.1	43.3	16.9	4.5	12.2
Teaching and learning practices	14.8	48.5	20.4	4.4	11.8
Assessment and reporting practices	5.0	27.3	41.2	13.9	12.5
School community understanding and involvement	3.5	26.8	36.9	16.5	16.2
Student learning outcomes	13.9	48.2	20.7	4.2	13.0

The evidence points overwhelmingly to the need for approaches to civics and citizenship education that are focused more explicitly on clearly-understood processes of school change and school community participation than has sometimes been the case to date. Certainly, the most celebrated ‘successes’ of professional development in *Discovering Democracy* appear to be those that have attempted, in a variety of ways, to do this. The impact of the school grants programme is the strongest indicator of this, as is the potential that key people such as professional development officers see in the grants programme to more closely integrate practice and professional development.

The findings from this evaluation point the way to the shape of professional development in any agenda that may be a focus for the future. Critically, professional development should be structured as an integral aspect of any major national agenda from its inception, as ‘materials’ of themselves gain deeper credibility in schools when they ‘fit’ with teachers’ professional learning. Importantly, there need to be structures in the states and territories that facilitate cross-sectoral engagement and professional dialogue – these two elements have been absolutely vital in the achievements of the professional development work undertaken in *Discovering Democracy*, as has the pivotal role played by the professional development officers.

The National Activities

The national activities in *Discovering Democracy* cover such initiatives as an annual national forum, an awards scheme, the National Student Constitutional Convention and *Celebrating Democracy Week*.

Overwhelmingly, the national activities are endorsed by stakeholder groups as significant elements in the profile of civics and citizenship education in Australia and as contributing especially to teacher and school awareness. As ‘flagship’ initiatives, they provide a sense of national imprimatur that all stakeholder groups regard as an essential component of a multi-faceted approach. The national initiatives are widely acknowledged as always well organised and promoted.

In addition to the increased profile for civics and citizenship education that come from the national activities, three other benefits are identifiable in the evidence:

the importance of the national recognition, especially for the work of teachers, that the national awards provide

the opportunities that teachers have to meet and work with others from other states and territories (similar to the cross-sectoral opportunities that are generally provided in the states and territories)

the opportunities to link in to the work of other national agencies that cover civics and citizenship education, such as the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs and the National Museum of Australia. These linkages are seen as being potentially problematic without a strong sense of national 'activity'.

These factors point to the conclusion expressed by many stakeholders contributing to this evaluation, that whatever the future direction of civics and citizenship education or related areas, there should be incorporated appropriate national activities that provide the level of national profile that teachers and school communities regard as vital and that contribute to teachers' professional learning.

School-level implementation of *Discovering Democracy*

At the time of the previous evaluation of *Discovering Democracy* in 1999, schools were found to be implementing *Discovering Democracy* at different levels. These levels ranged from those just finding out about the materials to those in various stages of early implementation. Four years on, there are still schools at these early stages but others have moved to a more sophisticated level of operation. Some schools have lost their direction. Others form lighthouses for schools across the country.

It must be noted that the case studies were chosen either from those schools recommended by state coordinators as practicing *Discovering Democracy* in some way, or from those that were case studies during the last evaluation. In this somewhat biased sample, one would expect that the level of teacher awareness of *Discovering Democracy* would be relatively high.

In many of the case study schools, teacher awareness of *Discovering Democracy* has been heightened considerably throughout the last four years. Some schools have formed Civics and Citizenship teams. Some teachers have participated widely in professional development, bringing ideas and enthusiasm, leadership and support into the school as a whole. Some schools have developed comprehensive scope and sequence guidelines that embed Civics and Citizenship in each Year. Whole school approaches to awareness-raising, planning, reflection and implementation have strongly supported the growth in understanding.

Access to *Discovering Democracy* materials, and the level of awareness of their existence, their purpose and their place in the curriculum, have increased in many of the case study schools. However, in most high schools, the awareness and access are limited to the Studies of Society and Environment faculty. The table below summarizes responses to the survey in how they typically teach civics and citizenship. Few schools said that they teach a comprehensive programme of civics and citizenship. Primary schools most frequently make use of isolated teaching activities in relation to specific

events, such as Anzac Day and other specific events. There is however, significant use (in around 60 per cent of primary schools) of the units of work both across learning areas and within particular learning areas. At the secondary level, nearly 80 per cent of schools teach within a particular learning area (most often SOSE), reflecting the strongly compartmentalised nature of the secondary school timetables. A significant proportion of secondary schools also take advantage of isolated teaching activities.

Table E5 : How civics and citizenship education (including *Discovering Democracy*) is typically taught.

	Primary (%)	Secondary (%)	All schools (%)
Specific events e.g. Harmony Day, Celebrating Democracy Week	52.2	37.6	45.6
Isolated teaching activities on specific topics, e.g. Anzac Day, Rights and Responsibilities, etc	73.4	60.5	66.3
Student citizenship participation activities	35.0	30.3	32.0
Unit(s) of work across several learning areas	56.9	30.3	47.1
Unit(s) of work within a particular learning areas	59.1	79.8	61.8
As an incidental part of work in learning areas	22.6	30.3	23.6
As a comprehensive programme of study in civics and citizenship	11.3	9.2	10.2

Like many other areas of study, civics and citizenship education in general, and *Discovering Democracy* in particular, are seen to be in competition with other priorities for time and space within the implemented curriculum. Where continuity of the programme at jurisdiction level has been disrupted for one reason or another, or where early change-champions have moved on, some schools that were implementing *Discovering Democracy* in 1999 now give it only a token role in their curriculum. In some cases, due for example to staff rollover or the dominance of other new curriculum developments, including literacy, numeracy and values education, little work has yet been undertaken in Civics and Citizenship *per se*.

In some cases, while the use of *Discovering Democracy* materials has decreased, there remain some elements of Civics and Citizenship study or practice. This is frequently through student leadership, debate or the celebration of national civic days. In some schools, Civics and Citizenship has been absorbed into values education, or is part of the community activity aspect of enterprise education. In these instances, the level of explicitness of Civics and Citizenship is often substantially different to the practice in schools where Civics and Citizenship has been expressly integrated and featured along with other perspectives.

At its most sophisticated, *Discovering Democracy* has become part of the daily operation of schools, both inside and outside the classroom. In addition to curriculum incorporation, as application of citizenship, it is embedded as part of the democratic operation of the school, providing the full range of students with opportunities to exercise practical citizenship.

In relation to measurement of success in *Discovering Democracy* or Civics and Citizenship, schools rely heavily on observation and anecdote. Few demonstrated any formal approach to measurement of outcomes, other than in testing content where the

approach is largely cognitive. In this formal testing, there was little to account for outcomes in the citizenship area, many of which were seen to be as important as, if not more important than, the knowledge outcomes. However, there were outstanding examples of movement into a more formal collection and analysis of authentic qualitative data to measure and reports student learning outcomes.

Factors facilitating use of Discovering Democracy in schools

Several common school-level facilitating factors emerged from the data provided by the survey and the school visits. Often these factors are interlinked, and act in conjunction with one another to support the schools' programmes.

Tables E5 and E6 summarises the perceptions of the schools responding to the survey about factors that had facilitated their use of *Discovering Democracy*. Several factors stand out. Teacher enthusiasm, (and the support of an advocate for the programme), and the availability of resource materials were most frequently rated as important facilitating factors. The availability of resources was more important for primary schools than secondary schools. Student enthusiasm, school leadership support, availability of professional development, and the support of parents and the community were also frequently rated as being extremely or moderately important. The availability of funding grants was least frequently considered to be an important facilitator, particularly for those who had not received a grant. Grants were relatively more important for the secondary schools responding to the survey, but secondary schools were also less likely to consider the availability of other forms of external support to be an important facilitating factor. The involvement of parents was also perceived to be a facilitating factor in some schools.

Table E5: Factors facilitating use of *Discovering Democracy* in primary schools.

	Extremely important (%)	Moderately important (%)	Little importance (%)	Not important (%)
Systemic requirements	23.0	52.5	19.8	5.1
School leadership support	37.6	47.5	11.4	3.4
Availability of external support	24.9	42.9	24.9	7.3
Availability of teaching/learning resources	65.4	32.3	0.4	1.9
Funding grants	28.2	28.6	28.2	15.1
Availability of professional development support	44.4	42.1	8.8	4.6
A strong advocate for <i>Discovering Democracy</i> in the school	51.7	37.0	8.7	2.6
Student enthusiasm/motivation	40.0	49.4	8.7	1.9
Teacher enthusiasm/motivation	69.2	29.3	0.4	1.1
Parent and community expectations	15.2	53.4	25.4	6.1

Table E6: Factors facilitating use of *Discovering Democracy* in secondary schools.

	Extremely important (%)	Moderately important (%)	Little importance (%)	Not important (%)
Systemic requirements	18.4	46.6	17.5	17.5
School leadership support	31.1	37.7	23.6	7.5
Availability of external support	19.6	36.4	31.8	12.1
Availability of teaching/learning resources	48.1	42.5	6.6	2.8
Funding grants	18.9	40.6	29.2	11.3
Availability of professional development support	42.6	33.3	19.4	4.6
A strong advocate for <i>Discovering Democracy</i> in the school	56.6	31.1	4.7	7.5
Student enthusiasm/motivation	36.1	46.3	13.0	4.6
Teacher enthusiasm/motivation	68.8	27.5	2.8	0.9
Parent and community expectations	8.4	45.8	30.8	15.0

The survey data are amplified by the observations made during the school case study visits. Several factors emerge from a consideration of this evidence that have relevance for possible future programme design.

Firstly, it is abundantly clear that the advancement of almost any programme, Civics and Citizenship included, depends on capturing the interest and engagement of enthusiastic individuals, that the literature terms “change champions”. The effect of these individuals in schools is noticeable. The commitment of these people lifts the programme above the ordinary.

The importance of support from school leadership cannot be underestimated. In all schools at the leading edge of implementation, the principal (or head teacher in secondary schools) was not only supportive of, but was generally involved in, the program. To establish a programme as a school priority, given the range of demands on schools, usually requires leadership support. Many individual teachers, no matter how enthusiastic, do not have the capacity to influence change on a school-wide basis. Capturing the interest of school leaders is not easy. Various professional development activities have targeted school leaders over the past three years, but further work remains to be done in this area.

Hindering factors

Schools were asked to rate the extent to which a range of factors had impacted negatively on the implementation of *Discovering Democracy* in their school. These findings are repeated in the following table, which shows schools’ perceptions of factors that had impacted negatively on *Discovering Democracy*. Again, competing school priorities was reported to be the most significant constraint. Table E7 shows that the difficulties encountered in implementing *Discovering Democracy* have little to do with the materials themselves. The majority of schools do not consider access to the materials, the quality and cost of the resources or the appropriateness of teaching strategies to be a problem. Access to professional development is an inhibitor in some schools, but for others it is not an issue. Likewise, access to the internet and computers is seen to impact negatively in some schools but not others

Table E7: Issues impacting negatively on the implementation of *Discovering Democracy*

	Great extent (%)	Moderate extent (%)	Little extent (%)	Not at all (%)
Access to the resources	12.0	22.7	39.6	25.7
Quality of the resources	5.2	13.3	42.5	39.0
Cost of additional materials	14.5	26.3	35.8	23.5
Level of difficulty for students	7.9	21.5	45.0	25.5
Integrating it into the existing curriculum	20.3	35.9	28.6	15.2
Appropriateness of teaching strategies	7.5	20.9	45.9	25.7
Opportunities for professional development	21.2	28.0	31.8	19.0
Access to computers with CDROM	16.8	24.0	28.5	29.8
Access to the internet	16.0	22.4	30.8	30.8
Competing school priorities	51.6	30.7	12.9	4.8

Conclusions

The “success” or otherwise of the *Discovering Democracy* programme, and therefore its future, needs to be viewed from a number of perspectives. After nearly seven years of funding, it may fairly be described as having reached a certain stage of maturity. The questions that need to be asked at this time are: (1) what remains to be done that may require continued funding; and (2) what would be the consequences of discontinuing funding.

From the Australian Government’s perspective, its responsibility has been to help establish the pre-conditions for successful implementation of civics and citizenship education by schools in all systems and sectors. The Australian Government’s role is not to direct what schools or education systems should be doing, nor does it have a direct responsibility for achieving student learning outcomes. What the Australian Government has done, through its funding contribution, is to make available curriculum materials on a widespread basis, together with professional development for teachers to assist them to make good use of the materials. It has also supported processes to ensure there is a means by which student knowledge and understanding in this area can be measured, and instituted processes by which the successes of implementation of *Discovering Democracy* can be shared and celebrated.

From the Australian Government’s perspective then, it can be said that all of its policy goals in relation to *Discovering Democracy* and for Civics and Citizenship education more broadly, have been achieved to a considerable extent. Civics and Citizenship Education has a clear place among the National Goals for Schooling, and an identifiable presence in the curriculum in all states and territories. A wealth of high quality materials have been made available to all schools, and given the efforts of the professional development officers over the lifespan of the programme, the opportunities for using the materials well documented. A procedure for conducting a national assessment of

student understanding and appreciation of civics and citizenship has been put in place, with a national sample study to be conducted in 2004.

From the perspective of the State and Territory education jurisdictions, the outlook is less clear. While acknowledging the achievements that have been made, it would appear that significant use of the *Discovering Democracy* materials within a well-structured, whole school programme that can demonstrate improved student learning outcomes has been fully achieved in no more than half the schools nationally (see for example, Table E2). In other words, the gap between best practice and “average” practice remains substantial. Whether this is satisfactory or not in terms of judgements about the adequacy of provision of civics and citizenship education would require a broader-based evaluation to answer. However, it is doubtful whether State and Territory education officials would agree that all that needs to be done has been done. Without further funding input, it is doubtful whether use of the materials by schools or teachers would be sustained for more than a few years. In this case, and without explicit direction, the quality and intensity of civics and citizenship education is not likely to improve.

From a school level perspective, apart from some exploratory work in the very early stages of implementation of “the kit”, *Discovering Democracy* in the majority of instances has never been seen as a programme in its own right, but rather as a set of resources that can be “dipped into” on an as required basis. It is now seen by the majority of users as “a means to an end, rather than an end in itself”. It is thus rarely taught in totality, or even in a sequential manner. This kind of usage is typical of the way teachers use any resource. The fact that teachers see the *Discovering Democracy* materials as useful in a variety of contexts is encouraging. In one sense, this is as much as could be expected from any curriculum resource. From another perspective, it is also cause for some concern. One of the reasons why the materials were developed in the first place was the perception that students’ (and teachers’) civic knowledge was not as well developed as it needs to be to meet the expectations which became expressed in the *National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-First Century* in 1999. The present approach is one that encourages only a superficial understanding if not taught well, (and it would appear to be a difficult thing to do well), and may therefore not be adequately addressing the principal objective of providing depth and breadth of civic understanding. The national test results in 2004 will provide some insights into the journey yet to be travelled here.

The extent to which the sentiments expressed in the following extract from the seminal report by the Civics Expert Group (which gave rise to the *Discovering Democracy* programme) have been achieved cannot be answered in the affirmative with any confidence.

“The education we need is one that will enable Australian citizens to participate in the present debates about our future with a better awareness of the legacy of the past... It should give them the knowledge and understanding to be able to join in the process of reconciliation... It should inform them of our constitutional legacy so that they can make up their own minds about whether Australia becomes a republic... And it should assist them to act as informed, confident, tolerant citizens, secure in their rights and the responsibilities as members of a diverse and inclusive society.”

“Whereas the People” Report of the Civics Expert Group. 1994, p. 27

If this analysis is accepted, and if it is agreed that further work needs to be done, then the question arises of who should pay for this work. From the point of view of the Australian Government, it could be argued that their contribution can be reduced. From a school and system perspective, this is only one among many competing priorities for which funding must be found. None of the education system officials interviewed were confident that their jurisdiction would, for example, continue to fund a professional development officer in this area without an Australian Government contribution.

Both arguments have merit, but both are superseded by the need to consider an even broader and more pressing national agenda to which civics and citizenship education, among other things, should contribute.

The issue for all parties is thus not whether Australian Government support for civics and citizenship should end but how they can leverage off the experiences to date.

What the extract from the Civics Expert Group above alludes to, is the need for schooling to assist young people to develop an understanding of their place in the world, and to have a principled and informed basis for acting in this world. It may be argued that this has always been a fundamental concern of school systems the world over. But events in both our national context and the international context, such as the Bali bombings, international terrorism, war in Afghanistan and Iraq, press home the point that coherent and consistent action is required here. There appears to be a coalescence of momentum from grassroots levels in school communities as well as opportunities provided by the national goals for schooling, including knowledge outcomes and broader social and equity outcomes areas than can be built on. There is some credence to the view that the Australian community (including school students) is perhaps more interested now in issues of civic values, national identity and our place in the world, than in the recent past.

This is not work that can be allowed to develop in an *ad hoc* way. Too much is at stake, from both the perspectives of national strategic imperatives as well as the practicalities of school pedagogical, structural and organisational change. It is no surprise that school people say that the pressure of the crowded curriculum is the major impediment to greater uptake of innovative programmes and practices. It is also not surprising that the most recent waves of curriculum innovation are moving away from the perceived restraints imposed by narrowly defined learning areas and are now embracing concepts such as “*Essential Learnings*”, as the conceptual underpinnings of curriculum. As was observed in this evaluation, best practice is achieved when learning concepts permeate the culture and fabric of schools, in the rituals and organisational practices by which the school works, as much as by direct instruction in classrooms. In the area of civics and citizenship education, cross-curricular and co-curricular applications must be considered alongside more traditional approaches to learning. This includes national initiatives such as the National Safe Schools Framework which can contribute to the development of student character and well-being.

Given these conditions, it is essential that a means be found that integrates a broad range of learning endeavours under one framework. Within this umbrella, there is a place for the inclusion of programmes among other things, in civics and citizenship education (including some former *Discovering Democracy* initiatives), values education, history education, studies of Asia, and Australian studies. Of these areas values

education will require major development and Studies of Asia will need to be strengthened to contribute to the development of regional and global citizenship.

As noted earlier, an approach that uses current events as a “way into” Civics and Citizenship studies is used by many teachers. This is not simply a matter of convenience, but a real reflection of the need and desire for students to develop a stronger understanding of the broader context and application of democratic values. The Australian Council of Deans has argued that, for the future:

“... new learning will be about creating a kind of person, better adapted to the kind of world we live in now and the world of the near future...as citizens we now simultaneously belong to many more kinds of community at the local, the regional and the global level...the key to civic harmony will be respecting and valuing diversity.” (A Charter for Australian Education’ The Australian Council of Deans of Education October 2001).

These sentiments echo the commitment of the Australian Government to ‘promoting diversity, understanding and tolerance in all areas of endeavour’¹. The importance of achieving this understanding has been highlighted by international events of the past few years, that have unavoidably drawn Australian citizens into reflection on issues as diverse as national identity, sovereignty, and the values that underpin our society.

Close engagement with Asia has become an abiding priority in Australian external policy, based on mutually beneficial relations in regard to economic and security interests². A stable regional security environment is understood to be fundamental to Australia’s national interests and Australian’s sense of social well-being. The Government considers that national security begins with community harmony and social cohesion. Tolerance, harmony and cohesion are ‘pivotal elements in enabling Australia to contribute effectively to the international effort to combat terrorism, and in safeguarding Australians domestically’³.

It is within this broader context of globalisation and trade relations, and of the desire to sustain external and internal security and harmony that studies of Asia stakes a special claim for inclusion in the learning experiences of all young Australians. However, its claims are not restricted to national economic and strategic considerations, studies of Asia will also assist young people to make sense of and engage more effectively with an increasingly complex world. It will enable them to ‘understand and acknowledge the value of cultural and linguistic diversity, and possess the knowledge, skills and understandings to contribute to, and benefit from, such diversity in the Australian community and internationally’⁴.

The Values Education Study funded by the Australian Government was just being released at the time when this evaluation was being written. This work will also need to be considered in the development of future policies and programs. The links between Civics and Citizenship education, as implemented through *Discovering Democracy*, and

¹ Commonwealth of Australia (2003) *Multicultural Australia: United in Diversity. Strategic Directions for 2003-2006*. AGPS, Canberra. p.1.

² Commonwealth of Australia (2003) *Advancing the National Interest: Australia’s Foreign and Trade Policy White Paper*. AGPS, Canberra

³ Commonwealth of Australia (2003) *Multicultural Australia: United in Diversity. Strategic Directions for 2003-2006*. AGPS, Canberra. p.7.

⁴ Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs (1999) *The Adelaide Declaration of National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-first Century*, Canberra (Goal 3.5)

Values Education as it is emerging, are strong. The data from the survey conducted for this evaluation, for example, demonstrates that the opportunity for “developing skills and values for participation as informed, reflective and active citizens (e.g., mutual respect, empathy, and critical thought)” is a highly valued component of their *Discovering Democracy* programme.

Similarly, the emphasis on promoting active citizenship evident in many schools and jurisdictions is consistent with the approach explored by schools in the Values Education Study. Many schools participating in the Values Education Study focused on the development of a range of what might be called student ‘coping strategies’, or self-management qualities.

This collection of qualities, attributes and, ultimately, behaviours was generally characterised as ‘resilience’. Many projects concentrated on student welfare and discipline as well and seeking to establish a firmer moral base – a values-based approach – for student behaviours and how they were managed. As well as personal responsibility and self-discipline, this tended to involve a substantial emphasis on mutual understanding and respect, and in some cases extended to defined service programmes in the local community. As demonstrated in the case studies of the implementation of *Discovering Democracy* conducted for this evaluation, many of the initiatives undertaken within Civics and Citizenship have similar aims and resulted in similar community participation projects.

It would seem possible and desirable for stronger integration of these goals, programmes and activities in a planned and systematic way to occur, perhaps under the umbrella of a cohesive Framework that articulates the relationship between these important areas of the curriculum.

Regardless of the shape of the Framework that is developed, it would be prudent to learn from the experiences of the present work in civics and citizenship education. Any new Framework should thus be based on the following principles:

- continuous professional dialogue across schools
- a focus on integration
- a focus on whole school development and implementation
- a balance between external pressure (in the form of accountability required), and support for development
- professional development which is sustained in the long term
- professional development which involves the school executive
- assistance directly to schools (perhaps in the form of small grants) to support school initiatives
- provision of opportunities for sharing and showcasing successes
- provision of advice to schools to focus on appropriate pedagogy as much as content.

Recommendations

In view of the strategic directions suggested by the findings of this evaluation, it is recommended that:

1. There is a need for Civics and Citizenship Education to be further implemented and for continued professional development for this area in order for it to become firmly embedded in schools in all states and territories. Such further development should be linked to broader values-based education to strengthen students' self-esteem, optimism and commitment to personal fulfilment; and to help students exercise ethical judgements and develop personal and social responsibilities. The groundwork laid through the current efforts in *Discovering Democracy* and Civics and Citizenship Education should be used as a platform for transition to this emerging agenda.
2. However, given the extent to which Civics and Citizenship Education has now become a curriculum priority in all jurisdictions and the importance of emerging national priorities and needs in the related area of values education, Australian Government support for *Discovering Democracy* as a discrete programme no longer be continued after the conclusion of the present funding cycle.
3. Future support for Civics and Citizenship Education by the Australian Government should be principally focussed on students' acquiring and applying civic values and understandings, in a global environment.
4. In the development of this emerging civic values agenda, explicit linkages should also be made to other national programmes including the Commonwealth History Project, Studies of Asia, Australian Studies and Multiculturalism and Reconciliation.
5. Initial four-year funding should be made available for a major values education and civics education programme, including additional resourcing for Studies of Asia to promote regional and global citizenship and intercultural understanding.
6. The purposes and learning outcomes for this civic values agenda should:
 - reflect the national goals for schooling,
 - be developed and clearly articulated through an appropriate national consultation mechanism,
 - have a strategic plan for national implementation,
 - have explicit linkages with the curriculum frameworks of the states and territories.
7. Within the agenda of civic values, some currently funded civics and citizenship initiatives should be incorporated and enhanced, particularly:
 - The *Discovering Democracy* website. Funding would need to be made available for the maintenance and further development of the website to provide additional features that facilitate student research, and provide in-depth student-oriented background material on current topics relevant to civic value. The website should be re-named to more appropriately reflect its role in supporting civic values education.

- National initiatives that increase the profile of civic values education, including the annual forum, the National Student Constitutional Convention and *Celebrating Democracy Week*.
8. In order to maintain the momentum already established by the *Discovering Democracy* programme in this civic values agenda, funding for professional development be made available that incorporates each of the following principles:
 - Encourages continuous professional dialogue within and across schools and sectors
 - Focuses on integration across the curriculum
 - Focuses on whole school development and pedagogy
 - Provides a balance between accountability and support
 - Incorporates accountability requirements
 - Addresses school change management issues for sustainability
 - Promotes engagement of school executive teams
 - Involves parents as partners in the process
 - Provides small seeding grants to support school practice and professional development
 - Involves teacher professional organisation
 - Provides opportunities for sharing and showcasing success, perhaps through a lighthouse school model to act as a locus for professional development.
 9. Funding be made available for the development of civic values curriculum materials covering the early years of schooling. The materials should be designed primarily for student use, consistent with the principles of early childhood education.
 10. A single national award programme should explicitly recognise and reward the work of school communities in promoting civic values education.
 11. A national strategic group representing a range of disciplines and interests, including parent's views, be constituted to provide advice on the development of a civic values education agenda.
 12. Further consideration be given to mechanisms by which a civic values education agenda can be successfully incorporated into teacher pre-service education.