

SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS
AUSTRALIAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

Question No. 5

Senator Wright asked the following question at the hearing on 16 October 2012:

Senator WRIGHT: Has the commission been formally involved in the drafting of the national school curriculum?

Prof. Triggs: Yes, we have, through our officer dedicated to that task. She has been strongly engaged with us. She is a professional in the area and has been very actively engaged.

Senator WRIGHT: What specific recommendations has the commission made in relation to human rights education in the national school curriculum?

Prof. Triggs: From memory, and from reading her most recent document in relation to this, I think she has been working much harder on building modules for education which will be integrated into different subjects—so that it is not taken as a standalone subject but something which can be slotted into the curriculum. Beyond that I cannot speak more precisely as to exactly what has been proposed. But, again, I can take that on notice and provided you with that information. We have made submissions in relation to all subject areas, but we can certainly provide you with much more focused information that.

Senator WRIGHT: Thank you. I would appreciate that.

The answer to the honourable senator's question is as follows:

The Commission is working closely with Australian Curriculum and Reporting Authority (ACARA) to promote the inclusion of human rights in the national curriculum. This has occurred through meetings, formal consultation processes including submissions, ACARA advisory group membership and Commissioner and officer level correspondence.

Recommendations to ACARA on integrating human rights into the national curriculum have been made in the following areas:

- General capabilities
- Cross-curriculum priorities
- Learning areas
- Inclusiveness and disability

1. General Capabilities

General capabilities play an important role in supporting young people to become successful learners, confident and creative individuals, and active and informed citizens. General capabilities are in all learning areas. General capabilities include ethical behaviour, personal and social competence, and intercultural understanding.

The Commission has made recommendations on general capabilities in human rights education: National School Curriculum: Position Paper of the Australian Human Rights Commission, 2 June 2011, at http://www.humanrights.gov.au/word/education/position_paper.doc.

The Principal Adviser, Community Engagement and Human Rights Education is a member of the ACARA Advisory Group on General Capabilities.

2. Cross-curriculum priorities

The Commission has made recommendations on how to integrate human rights into the cross-curriculum priorities: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures, Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia, and Sustainability: Consultation on the cross-curriculum priorities Australian Human Rights Commission's submission to the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, 1 September 2011, at http://www.humanrights.gov.au/legal/submissions/2011/20110901_curriculum.html.

3. Learning areas

Civics and Citizenship

The Commission has made recommendations to ACARA on the Civics and Citizenship shape paper: Strengthening human rights education in the Civics and Citizenship Curriculum. Recommendations on the *Civics and Citizenship Draft Shape Paper*, 28 August 2012, at http://www.humanrights.gov.au/legal/submissions/2012/20120828_civics.html.

Geography

The Commission has made recommendations on the development of the geography curriculum: Recommendations on *Shape of the Australian Curriculum: Geography*, 7 July 2011, at http://www.humanrights.gov.au/legal/submissions/2011/20110707_hrededucation.html; and Strengthening human rights education in the Geography Curriculum, Recommendations on Draft *Geography Curriculum*, 24 February 2012, at http://www.humanrights.gov.au/legal/submissions/2011/20110707_hrededucation.html.

History

The Commission made a submission on the history curriculum in a letter to ACARA on 21 October 2011.

Health and Physical Education

The Commission made a submission providing recommendations on strengthening human rights content in the health and physical education curriculum: Strengthening human rights education in the Health and Physical Education Curriculum. Recommendations on *Shape of the Australian Curriculum: Health and Physical Education*, 6 June 2012, at http://www.humanrights.gov.au/legal/submissions/2012/20120606_physical_education.html.

Economics and Business

The Commission has made recommendations on including human rights in the economics and business curriculum: Strengthening human rights education in the Economics and Business curriculum. Recommendations on *Draft Shape of the Australian Curriculum: Economics and Business*, 10 October 2012, at http://www.humanrights.gov.au/legal/submissions/2012/20121010_economics.html.

4. Inclusiveness and disability

The Commission has provided recommendations to ACARA on inclusive education development and using the curriculum to meet the learning needs of students with disabilities. This has been through meeting with the Disability Discrimination Commissioner, Graeme Innes and through officer level communication.