

SUBMISSION TO THE SENATE INQUIRY INTO ACADEMIC STANDARDS OF SCHOOL EDUCATION

**Submitted by the History Teachers' Association of NSW (HTA NSW)
on behalf of the History Teachers' Association of Australia (HTAA)**

Presented by HTA NSW Executive Officer: Louise Zarmati

Introduction

- The History Teachers Association of Australia (HTAA) is the peak body representing teachers of History from all states and the ACT.
- It is a federation of History Teachers' Associations from each of the states and the ACT.
- It represents more than 2 500 teachers of History across Australia.

The teaching of History in Australia

- The teaching of History varies significantly across the states and the ACT.
- In Victoria and Queensland, History is taught as a subject within the domain of Studies of Society and the Environment (SOSE).
- At present, History is taught as a discrete subject from Years 7-12 *only* in NSW.

Teaching of History skills – compulsory schooling years

- All states and territories identify important skills associated with History, such as source analysis, critical thinking and interpretation.
- The extent to which these skills are taught consistently and effectively across Australia is difficult to ascertain.
- This is in part due to the fact that many students are taught during the compulsory years of schooling by teachers with limited formal training in History.
- The HTAA maintains it is important that teachers be adequately trained to teach History in their pre-service training.
- The HTAA also strongly believes it is essential that in-service training be provided so that practising History teachers are adequately skilled and knowledgeable in the latest historical and pedagogical information.
- The History Teachers Associations in each state and the ACT work hard to ensure that in-service training in History is provided by academics and practising teachers on an ongoing basis.

Teaching of History skills in Years 11 and 12

- However, there is a greater degree of comparability in the teaching of History in the post-compulsory years of school, where all states and the ACT provide History as a discrete subject.
- Generally, these senior classes are more likely to be taught by teachers with an academic background in History and some training in History pedagogy.

- Queensland has recently introduced new courses in Modern, Medieval and Ancient History with a strong component of Australian History included.
- NSW has demonstrated considerable success in developing senior History courses:
 1. Senior History in NSW is very strong in the post-compulsory years: Modern and Ancient History attract over **20,000 students** for the HSC.
 2. Ancient History is now the most popular Ancient History course *in the English-speaking world* with over 11,000 candidates sitting for the Higher School Certificate examination in 2006.
 3. NSW also offers a challenging HSC Course that caters to the needs of academically gifted students: the Extension History course that focuses on teaching the skills of historiography and historical research.
 4. All three senior History courses are examined in the Higher School Certificate.

Teaching Civics and Citizenship

- History teaches students about such aspects of civics and citizenship as:
 1. the historical processes in which ideologies were developed by humans over time.
 2. How Australian adults participate as active citizens in Australia's democratic processes.
 3. Values and attitudes in Australia and other nations, past and present.
- However assessing values and attitudes and determining whether students have a practical understanding of Civics and Citizenship is problematic because of its mercurial nature.
- That is not to say that we don't or should not educate students on Civics and Citizenship and values and attitudes in our History syllabuses.
- Queensland and Victoria teach Civics in their syllabuses and NSW has a strong track record of teaching Civics and Citizenship and Values and Attitudes in, especially in the Years 9 and 10 History syllabus.

Standards testing

- In NSW over **85,000 students in Year 10** sit for the History, Geography, Civics and Citizenship test each year.
- Therefore NSW students leave school in Year 10 with solid grounding in Australian History, from 1900 to the present, and their knowledge and skills have been formally tested.
- At present, NSW is the only state that tests students specifically in a state-wide examination on historical knowledge and skills in the Higher School Certificate examination.
- A high standard of comparability and equity is maintained by the NSW Board of Studies who administers these examinations.
- The NSW Boards of Studies Standards Reference Marking system has been rigorously applied to the examination of all Higher School Certificate courses since 2002.