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Before joining the University of Melbourne in 2006, he had been foundation Director for Education at the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in Paris, Executive Director of the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) in Melbourne and Professor of Education at Murdoch University in Perth. He began his professional life as a science and mathematics teacher in Queensland secondary schools.

Professor McGaw is a Fellow of the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia, the Australian Psychological Society, the Australian College of Educators and the International Academy of Education. He was appointed an Officer of the Order of Australia in 2004.
Outline of presentation

- Educational goals for young Australians.
- How might the curriculum address religious world views?
- Where in the curriculum are religious world views addressed?
- Providing resources for teachers and students.
- Where are we now?
Educational goals for young Australians
In 1989, the council of education ministers issued its *Hobart Declaration on Common and Agreed Goals of Schooling*. In 1999, the ministers updated this with their *Adelaide Declaration on National Goals for Schooling in Australia in the 21st Century*. Each of these stimulated work on principles on which a curriculum could be developed but neither moved towards a national curriculum. This reflected an active decision to leave curricula to the States and Territories.

The *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* issued by the council of education ministers in December 2008 provided a first national commitment by all ministers to a common curriculum across the country. It also proposed a structure for the curriculum that reintroduced history and geography as separate subjects and added business and economics within a humanities and social sciences grouping.

In relation to consideration of how religious world views might be catered for in an Australian curriculum, it is worth noting that, in the preamble to the *Melbourne Declaration*, there is an explicit claim that “schools play a vital role in promoting … spiritual … development and wellbeing of young Australians” and that this, along with the promotion of ‘intellectual, physical, social, emotional, moral and aesthetic development’ of young Australians, will contribute to ‘economic prosperity and social cohesion’.
The Melbourne Declaration declared two broad goals:

- One for the education system as a whole: that Australian schooling promotes equity and excellence;
- One for students: that all young Australians become:
  - Successful learners
  - Confident and creative individuals, and
  - Active and informed citizens.

As noted already, the preamble to the Melbourne Declaration claims that schools can promote spiritual development and wellbeing. The intention that this be achieved is expressed in the details for the sub-goal of ‘all young Australians becoming ‘confident and creative individuals’ who, the Declaration says, ‘have a sense of self-worth, self-awareness and personal identity that enables them to manage their emotional, mental, spiritual and physical wellbeing.

- ...
- ...

- Confident and creative individuals:
In their *Melbourne Declaration*, ministers set out ‘A Commitment to Action’ which included ‘promoting world-class curriculum’. Ministers declared, among other things, that “The curriculum will enable students … to understand the spiritual, moral and aesthetic dimensions of life …”

No subject on religion or religious and non-religious world views included.

Presumably, the goal of spiritual development and wellbeing was expected to be met through other subjects.

Nothing on how broadly ‘spiritual’ might be interpreted.

Curriculum:

The curriculum will enable students to develop knowledge in the disciplines of English, mathematics, science, languages, humanities and the arts; to understand the spiritual, moral and aesthetic dimensions of life …

In their *Melbourne Declaration*, ministers set out ‘A Commitment to Action’ which included ‘promoting world-class curriculum’. Ministers declared, among other things, that “The curriculum will enable students … to understand the spiritual … dimensions of life.”

While the ministers’ declaration included a specification of the subjects/learning areas around which the curriculum was to be built, no subject on religion or religious and non-religious world views was contained in the list. Presumably, the expectation was that the goal of spiritual development and wellbeing would be met through other parts of the curriculum.

Further, the *Melbourne Declaration* says nothing about how broadly ‘spiritual development’ might be interpreted and how it might be addressed in the curriculum.
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How might the curriculum address religious world views?
The Australian Curriculum sets down students’ learning entitlements in content descriptions. When the first drafts of the curriculum were circulated for comment, some respondents said that they thought teachers would need more extensive material. Rather than add content, the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) added content elaborations that offer teachers some ideas of what they and their students might do to cover particular content.

The initial remit to the Board was to develop a national curriculum in only English, mathematics, science and history. Before work had begun, geography, the Arts, Languages, Economics & Business, Civics & Citizenship, Health & Physical Education, Technologies had been added to be developed in a second phase. A further four, economics and business, civics and citizenship, health and physical education, and technologies, as the remaining subjects named in the Melbourne Declaration, were added to be developed in a third phase.

While this set of successive remits implied that the curriculum would be structured around disciplines of knowledge, the Board was well content with this approach. It did, however, add two further dimensions identified in the Melbourne Declaration.

One involves the so-called 21st century skills which the Board chose to call general capabilities since it is obvious that at least most of them were important in earlier centuries as well. It is true, of course, that there are new dimensions to some of the capabilities in the technology-rich environments that characterise much learning, work and play in the 21st century and that is taken into account.

The other involves three issues identified in the Melbourne Declaration as needing special attention. They have been named as current cross-curriculum priorities. If the attention given to them is successful, they will not need special identification in later versions of the curriculum because their place would have been secured.

ACARA intends the Australian Curriculum in the years Foundation to 10 to occupy no more
There are 8 learning areas (disciplines, domains of knowledge) named in the Melbourne Declaration and now in the Australian Curriculum: English, mathematics, science, humanities and social sciences (including history, geography, economics and business, and civics and citizenship), languages, the arts, health and physical education, and technologies.

The seven general capabilities shown in the slide above complete the curriculum.

The three current, cross-curriculum priorities to which special attention is being given are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures, Asia and Australia’s engagement with Asia, and sustainability. These do not displace other cross-curriculum ideas that are more securely established in the curriculum. They are named to give them a particular salience to ensure that they also are attended to.

Neither the general capabilities nor the cross-curriculum priorities have established as additional subjects to be taught. All are to be covered, where relevant, in the 8 learning areas. The three-dimensional display above represents the expectation that, when the curriculum is fully developed, all the content descriptions required for the three dimensions will be contained in the box. In the Australian Curriculum there is an explicit indication for each content description and content elaboration for which, if any, of the general capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities it might be relevant. There are only a few of the general capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities named for each. That makes clear that many of the cells in the figure in the slide above will be empty.

There are, for example, no content descriptions in mathematics that would be relevant to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures. There are some content elaborations (ideas that teachers might want to use in dealing with the content) for which this cross-curriculum priority might be relevant. One is to use Aboriginal art when dealing with symmetry in Year 3 geometry. Another is to use statistical reports on the life expectancy of all Australians and, separately, of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Year 10 statistics when students are learning how to compare datasets.
The purpose of including religious world views in the curriculum is to give all students an opportunity to learn about religions and spirituality and about non-religious belief systems and to see that religious beliefs and non-religious worldviews are an important aspect of the lives of many Australians. This is to be achieved within the 80% of school time required for the Australian Curriculum.

In the remaining 20%, schools or their jurisdictions have discretion.

In faith-based schools there is an opportunity within this 20% to teach the details of the faith on which the school is founded and to commend that faith to students. It is important this be done in a way that is educationally sound, allowing for dissent and disengagement by students who are unwilling to accept the faith commended to them.

In government schools, where there is special religious instruction, offered by persons from outside the school under the historic provisions for churches to have access to students from their congregations or, more generally, their faith group, this can be accommodated in the 20%. It is not part of the Australian Curriculum. In my view, this provision, where it is made, should be offered on an opt-in not an opt-out basis for students and their parents.

Beyond class time, there is also the possibility of voluntary religious groups operating as extra-curricula activities in schools, during lunch breaks or before or after school hours. Again, these are not part of the Australian Curriculum. The terms on which these would operate are matters for schools and/or their jurisdictions.
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Where in the curriculum are religious world views addressed?
As indicated earlier, the *Melbourne Declaration*’s list of subjects/learning areas did not include anything specifically dealing with religious or non-religious world views. This was consistent with state and territory curricula at the time.

If they are to be dealt with, they need to be dealt with through the subjects/learning areas that comprise the overall Australian Curriculum. In it, religious and non-religious world views are dealt with in:

- Civics and Citizenship
- History
- Geography

Whether that provision is appropriate is one important question. If it is appropriate, whether it is adequate is another.
The broad picture is that religions and other belief systems are dealt with in the Australian Curriculum from year 2 to year 10.

In history, the focus is on the contribution of religions and other belief systems to the development of Australian society and, in year 10, on how they have changed over time.

In civics and citizenship, the focus is on the role of religions and other belief systems in contemporary Australia, as ‘a secular nation and a multi-faith society’.

In geography, the focus is on cultural diversity and the spiritual (and other) values of water and landscapes and landforms, including for indigenous peoples in Australia and elsewhere.

The entries in the table in the slide above are extracted from the Australian Curriculum. The full details are available at [www.australiancurriculum.edu.au](http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au).
The content descriptions in civics and citizenship that are relevant to a consideration of religious and non-religious world views, shown in the previous slide, are shown here together with relevant content elaborations. Content descriptions related to skills are also added to those related to knowledge and understanding.

Coverage begins in year 4 with a focus on the role of religious and other groups in shaping personal identity, with students thinking about their own and others’ identities. For older students in years 7 to 9, consideration turns to the nature of Australia as ‘a secular nation and a multi-faith society’, the religions practised in contemporary Australia and how and why religious groups participate in civil life.
The content descriptions in history that are relevant to a consideration of religious and non-religious world views, shown in slide 16, are shown here together with relevant content elaborations.

Coverage begins in year 2 with a focus on historical sites of cultural or religious significance and moves in year 3 to an examination of celebrations and commemorations that occur in other places around the world, particularly in countries and traditions from which the contemporary Australian population has been drawn.

In years 5 to 10, the focus is on the contribution of religion in shaping Australia and, in year 8, the spread of Christianity and Islam in earlier centuries.
The content descriptions in geography that are relevant to a consideration of religious and non-religious world views, shown in slide 16, are shown here together with relevant content elaborations. Here, as indicated in slide 16, the focus is on cultural diversity and the spiritual (and other) values of water and landscapes and landforms, including for indigenous peoples in Australia and elsewhere.
The questions of whether the coverage of religious and non-religious world views in the Australian Curriculum is appropriate and adequate are both important.

The picture presented for civics and citizenship, history and geography in the previous slides is, in part, an after-the-fact analysis of where the issues are covered. In the case of civics and citizenship, there was also detailed consideration in the planning. ACARA convened a forum on the place of religions and non-religious beliefs the in curriculum on 16 November 2011 as work on civics and citizenship curriculum was beginning. Both the Australian Association for Religious Education (AARE) and the Religious Education and Ethics Network of Australia (REENA) were involved in that forum.

Subsequently, REENA has contributed to the review that has yielded the analyses shown in the previous slides.

Coverage of religious and non-religious world views is strongest in civics and citizenship though it is also there in history and geography. It should be clear, however, that the Australian Curriculum does not provide for detailed study of any particular religion or a study of comparative religions.

What teachers will, in the end, be able to do with the coverage of religious and non-religious world views will depend on resources available to them and their students and also to the professional development opportunities they can access.
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The Australian Curriculum is delivered electronically to make it readily searchable and to provide the capacity for filters to be applied to leave exposed only those aspects in which a user is interested at the time. This and following slides show how to reach Year 5 History.
Select Learning areas / Subjects and then History.
Several views of the curriculum for any year level are available. The one shown above displays both content descriptions and content elaborations for each year level, in this case year 5. The full set for the year can be found by scrolling down the page.
While implementation of the Australian Curriculum remains in the hands of state and territory education authorities and the non-government school sector, there is a major national development that is producing an important resource on which teachers can draw.

Education Services Australia (ESA) has developed a substantial database of resources for teachers. The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) and ESA have collaborated to apply common meta-tags to content descriptions in the Australian Curriculum and resources in ESA’s database which is accessible through a website www.scootle.edu.au.

The Scootle website can be reached directly from the Australian Curriculum website. Once there, as shown on the image of the Scootle home page above, there is an option for a teacher to ‘find [resources] by the Australian Curriculum’.
If a teacher were to select Year 5 history and then take one of the content descriptions, the webpage shown above would appear. The content description and the associated content elaborations would be shown. This information is drawn from the same database that the Australian Curriculum website draws from so there are no problems with version control.

In the top right of the page there is an indication of which of the general capabilities (in this case, three of the seven) and which of the cross-curriculum priorities (in this case, two of the three) could be dealt with using this content.

In the middle of the page, there is a report on how many resources are available in the Scootle database. In this case, there are 348, of which 201 are reported to have been created through ESA's \textit{The Le@rning Federation}, and 147 have been sourced from the web. Of the 348, 337 are classroom resources and 11 are teacher reference materials.

Further down the page there is a gallery with representations of the resources that are one click away. (Access is password restricted because some of the material has been provided for inclusion on the basis that access will be granted only to teachers and student teachers.)

At this stage, there are few resource materials collected in ESA's database that deal with issues of religion. The civics and citizenship curriculum was completed only at the end of 2013 and is not yet slated for implementation in any of the jurisdictions so there is time for resources to be developed. There is clearly an opportunity for interested groups to develop quality materials and to approach ESA about having them incorporated in the Scootle database.

To date, the Scootle database has been linked to the Australian Curriculum only in English, mathematics, science, history and geography.
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Where are we now?
To date, religious and non-religious world views are covered in the Australian Curriculum only in civics and citizenship, history and geography to the extent outline in this presentation. There are yet only limited resources available for teachers to support their coverage of the topics.

Development of the elements of the curriculum related to the general capabilities, Intercultural understanding; Ethical Understanding and Personal and Social Capability in the school curriculum will also contribute.

The Australian Curriculum provides some information for students on the religious and cultural diversity of contemporary Australia, how that diversity has developed over time and how this multi-faith society fits within a secular nation.

The Australian Curriculum does not provide a comparative study of religions nor a detailed study of any particular religion.

Some may want more or less than this but, in my view, the provisions are limited and appropriate.
Thank you.