

National Curriculum Board

Framing Paper Consultation Report: History

May 2009

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1. Introduction

The National Curriculum Board has been charged with developing a single, world-class national curriculum for all Australian students from Kindergarten to Year 12, starting with the key learning areas of English, mathematics, the sciences and history.

On 20 November 2008, the National Curriculum Board released for public consultation the set of curriculum framing papers for English, mathematics, the sciences and history. The consultation period officially closed on 28 February 2008. The purpose of the consultation was to obtain feedback from stakeholders that would inform the rewriting of the framing papers to the point where they would be foundational documents for writing the national curriculum.

The framing papers were developed from advice obtained through an extensive consultation process involving national forums, guidance from individual experts and focus groups, input from teachers and academics, and direct feedback through the Board's website.

This report provides a brief description of the consultation process, the process of data analysis, and a summary of the analysis of all feedback received. The summary analysis outlines affirmations for the directions in the framing papers, and matters requiring further examination.

The feedback analysis is representative of more than 1100 responses, 302 of which were in relation to the history Framing Paper. Feedback was received in two forms – via completion of surveys (most through online lodgement) responding to questions asked by the Board, and via formal submissions lodged either electronically or by mail. It represents the contributions of education authorities, professional education associations, individual educators, business and industry, community groups and individuals. The report also provides tabulated data indicating the spread of responses across the many stakeholder groups.

The Board acknowledges with appreciation the contributions of all respondents to the consultation. Many written submissions were extraordinarily detailed, while others provided briefer more indicative input, clearly waiting to contribute further as the curriculum writing process gets under way.

2. Consultation

Process

The National Curriculum Board has committed to an open curriculum development process with substantial consultation with the profession and the public. Stakeholder groups include government, education authorities (national, state and territory, government, Catholic and Independent, and local school authorities where such bodies exist), parent bodies, professional educational associations, academics, business and industry groups, wider community groups and interested individuals from the wider community.

The Board's primary consultation instrument was a survey seeking stakeholder responses to questions posed by the Board in relation to each framing paper. The survey instrument was placed on the Board's website to permit online completion and lodgement. Respondents for whom this was not suitable chose to either mail, email to the Board's feedback box (feedback@ncb.org.au) or fax the survey responses in to the Board.

Many stakeholders chose to respond by preparing formal submissions. These were received by the Board through mail, email or fax.

All online survey responses and submissions through the Board's electronic feedback mailbox triggered an immediate electronic message of acknowledgment and appreciation for the contribution. All other submissions were responded to individually by staff of the Office of the Board.

Section 5 of this report contains a summary of framing paper survey responses and submissions by respondent group.

The consultation period officially closed on 28 February 2009. At this point in time, the online survey environment was closed. However, significant numbers of responses continued to flow in after that date, and were being entered into the data base as late as the end of March. During March, a gap analysis of major stakeholders was prepared, and direct contact was made with those stakeholders, to ensure that submissions were still forthcoming and would be taken into account in the data analysis process.

In addition to this formal consultation process, a range of consultation forums were held to ensure that specific concerns also within the Board's curriculum development responsibilities are met. These include:

- equity and diversity
- futures-orientation
- stages of schooling
- continua for literacy, numeracy and ICT
- needs of Indigenous children and incorporation of Indigenous perspectives
- Asia-literacy and
- sustainability.

Data Analysis

Upon receipt, every submission and survey response was formally recorded. Those not received through the online process were either scanned (in the case of submissions) or entered manually into the database. A single record of the details of all responses was updated as they were received and weekly summary reports prepared.

Every submission was read by relevant Board staff, and a summary of significant points in each submission was noted for consideration in the collation and analysis of the data. At the same time, the full text of all submissions was recorded for analysis.

The outcomes of the data analysis have been documented in two main forms – feedback that affirms the directions (broad and specific) of the individual framing papers, and feedback that indicates matters that require further examination. In the latter case, additional processes have been put in place to conduct that further examination.

From the data analysis, major affirmations and major areas for examination have been identified in the report. These have been identified both by the strength and frequency of their presence in the responses. Minority insights from individuals or groups of respondents were respectfully taken into account but may not necessarily appear in the report. This does not indicate a rejection of their value as contributions, but recognition of the major directions and concerns emanating from the larger body of data.

3. Feedback affirming the directions in the History Framing Paper

The quantitative data, provided in the table below, indicates support for the History Framing Paper as a whole.

| Question | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|--|-------------------|----------|-------|----------------|
| To what extent do you agree with the aims of the national history curriculum? | 4% | 7% | 41% | 48% |
| This section of the paper proposes three components to incorporate into the national history curriculum: Overview, Bridging and Study in depth. To what extent do you agree with these components? | 4% | 12% | 42% | 42% |
| To what extent do you agree with the proposals for incorporating a futures orientation? | 6% | 8% | 38% | 48% |
| To what extent do you agree with the proposed components of historical understanding? | 0% | 7% | 33% | 60% |
| To what extent do you agree with the proposed cross-curriculum implications for national history curriculum? | 2% | 10% | 48% | 40% |
| This section of the paper proposes some guidelines for the structure of the national history curriculum. To what extent do you agree with the proposals? | 1% | 7% | 51% | 41% |
| To what extent do you agree with the proposed national history curriculum for Stage 1 of schooling? | 5% | 15% | 43% | 37% |
| To what extent do you agree with the proposed national history curriculum for Stage 2 of schooling? | 6% | 20% | 47% | 27% |
| To what extent do you agree with the proposed national history curriculum for Stage 3 of schooling? | 12% | 20% | 41% | 27% |
| To what extent do you agree with the proposed national history curriculum for Stage 4 of schooling? | 17% | 23% | 40% | 20% |

Feedback has been supportive of the broad directions proposed in the history framing paper.

Strong support was expressed for:

- The acknowledgement of history as a discrete discipline in the national curriculum
- The proposed aims in the framing paper
- The proposed components of historical understanding
- The placement of Australian history within the larger context of world history
- The futures orientation.

General support was expressed for:

- The structure of the history curriculum
- The cross curriculum implications outlined in the framing paper.

4. Feedback requiring further examination

1.0 Engagement value

- 1.1 Many respondents expressed serious concern about the engagement value of what was proposed in the framing paper. In particular, respondents related their concerns about low student engagement to a reliance on the field of world history, the amount of content and the conceptual difficulty of the content.
- 1.2 The issue of student engagement featured strongly as a concern for both the primary and secondary years of schooling. There were frequent requests for a curriculum that will enable teachers to excite the 'historical imagination', provide scope for historical 'debate' and coverage of the more 'dramatic moments' in history.
- 1.3 Many respondents drew attention to the need to consider what will interest children and adolescents at different stages of their development.
- 1.4 There was widespread agreement that what is needed is time to engage student's interest and develop skills.
- 1.5 A number of respondents indicated that there needed to be a greater emphasis on practical history, such as the use of artefacts, museums, historical sites, heritage issues and hands-on activities, particularly in the primary curriculum.
- 1.6 Some respondents commented that the nature of the proposed content would have major implications for student enthusiasm for history, leading to a decline in enrolments in senior history courses.

2.0 The field of world history

- 2.1 As stated in the framing paper, 'world history is a distinct field of historical study, with its own practitioners, practices and literature.' Respondents agreed in principle with the world history narrative as a framework for the national history curriculum for Years 7–10.
- 2.2 There was a strong expression of hope that the curriculum focus hereon in will be on the nature and interests of the learner, rather than attempting to remain true to the 'distinct field' of world history. It was argued that the world history approach presented in the framing paper was only one way of viewing the world and that there was too much concentration on complex intellectual, economic and social developments.
- 2.3 A number of respondents suggested that the approach needed was to promote a balance between the study of processes that had long-term significance and history as the lived experience of individuals and groups.
- 2.4 Some respondents considered that while world history is useful as a broad base for contextualising historical knowledge, it is not an optimum introduction to history for students.

3.0 Scope of content and allocation of hours

- 3.1 Respondents expressed very strong concern about the scope of content, particularly in Stages 2 and 3, with reference to terms such as 'huge', 'overambitious' and 'unrealistic'. They called for a significant rationalisation of content across Stages 2–3.
- 3.2 The concern about Stage 2 was frequently related to the ten percent of time allocated to history which was viewed as excessive. It was argued by a number of respondents that it would be difficult to cover all the proposed content even with a ten percent time allocation.

- 3.3 Several respondents advised that the time allocations in history (ten percent of teaching time in primary and 400 hours for the secondary) needed to be considered in relation to the requirements of other subjects and strands, including elective courses.
- 3.4 Some respondents requested more clarity, particularly in Stage 3 about what studies in depth will be mandatory, what options there will be and if there will be a place in the history curriculum for school or teacher developed options. The provision of options was very strongly supported. This was seen as important to enable teachers to draw on their expertise and ensure that what they teach has resonance for their students.
- 3.5 Concern was raised that there is potential for oversimplification of important historical issues by compacting them into the timeframe available in the Years 9–10 curriculum.

4.0 Selection of content

- 4.1 Certain groups of respondents commented on the content that had been selected, particularly perceived omissions of content, and provided suggestions for additions or amendments.
- 4.2 There were frequent references to the Eurocentric nature of the content proposed for Stages 2-3. This was in relation to both the dates selected for the Years 7–10 units and the content of the units in Stages 2 and 3. There were also requests for a strengthening of Asian history in the curriculum.
- 4.3 There were calls for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives and history to be included in each stage of learning. Suggested content included the period before European arrival, the impact of contact, the fight for rights and recognition and the impact of government policies on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- 4.4 Other recommended content included environmental history, Islamic history, religious influences and globalisation.
- 4.5 Although there was minimal feedback from primary practitioners, some respondents were concerned that the content of Stage 2 would limit the ability of teachers to explore the contested nature of the history. There was a concern that this would lead to the creation of an 'official history' and a 'sanitised' version of Australia's past.
- 4.6 Respondents who provided feedback about Stage 2 expressed most support for the topic, 'How did we live then?'. This reflected a general request for the inclusion of more social history in both the primary and secondary history curriculum. This was seen as important for connecting students to experiences and content relevant to members of their families and communities.
- 4.7 There was some questioning about the level of emphasis on local history in the primary, although its inclusion was widely supported. It was argued that not all local areas are well equipped or resourced to regularly examine local history.
- 4.8 Concern about the dominance of Australian history in the primary curriculum was raised, with repeated requests for more global history content.
- 4.9 Some commented on problems relating to the conflation of particular historical topics.

5.0 Organisation of content

- 5.1 Respondents sought further clarification concerning the internal structure of all courses. The overall organisation of Stage 3 into four chronological periods was generally supported, with a few respondents questioning the need for a strict chronological approach. Opinion was divided about the placement of topics within the curriculum such as Federation and World War I and the chronological boundaries between topics.
- 5.2 The content within Stage 2 was perceived as lacking cohesion. The focus questions used to organise the content in Stage 2 were viewed by some respondents as being too restrictive.
- 5.3 It was recommended that in Stage 3 there should be an introductory unit that outlines the purposes of studying history, the nature of sources and evidence and the methodologies of the historian.
- 5.4 The repetition of content between the primary and secondary areas was frequently highlighted, particularly in relation to Australian history. Respondents warned that negative reactions to Australian history were often related to student perception of repetition.
- 5.5 There was strong concern about the potential for considerable overlap between the proposed content for year 10 and any senior Modern History course.

6.0 Conceptual difficulty of the content

- 6.1 Respondents frequently highlighted the complexity of the concepts students are expected to study.
- 6.2 For Stage 1 the concerns related to the 'concepts of time'. Respondents commented that concepts such as decade, century, ancient, modern and BC, AD and CE were too sophisticated for students in that stage and advised that these concepts would be more appropriately taught in Stage 2.
- 6.3 For Stage 2 and 3 concepts that were seen as being too advanced included 'theocracies' and 'Eurasian world system'. Respondents expressed unease with the highly complex events proposed in Stage 3, such as the French Revolution and Napoleonic wars. Unit 4 in Stage 3 was viewed as being very sophisticated conceptually.
- 6.4 The standards included in the framing paper were described as being very unrealistic, particularly for Stage 2.

7.0 The overview, bridging, study in depth components

- 7.1 The feedback from respondents revealed that this is an area of contention.
- 7.2 Some respondents agreed with the triple division while others questioned the need for the bridging component on the grounds that it favoured a strong sense of chronology and therefore a narrower conception of what history is about. It was also argued that the bridging component was not clearly understood by teachers and should be removed. The term 'historical context' was suggested as an alternative.
- 7.3 Others argued that the bridging component was good pedagogy and that it would assist students to develop an understanding of cause and effect between the depth studies.
- 7.4 Some respondents advocated for a simpler survey and study in depth approach for less complexity and to enable more choice and flexibility within topics. The relevance of the bridging component was particularly questioned for primary.

- 7.5 The framing paper's suggestion that an overview would involve substantial teacher exposition and limited student inquiry was viewed as an unnecessary restriction.
- 7.6 There was very strong support for depth studies in the history curriculum. Further information was requested however about the minimum number of depth studies that would be required and the hours expected for each.

8.0 The nature and duration of the senior courses

- 8.1 Respondents generally felt that they were unable to comment on the Stage 4 curriculum due to the lack of detail in the framing paper.
- 8.2 One year courses were not supported; neither was the placement of Modern history in Year 11 and Ancient history in Year 12. Respondents called for two year senior history courses and pointed to the value in teachers having sufficient time to know their students and allow for depth of study, engagement and the development of historical skills.
- 8.3 The provision of a range of history courses at the senior level was welcomed. The Australian history course received the least amount of support.
- 8.4 Some respondents, mainly from NSW, emphasised the success of the NSW senior history courses in terms of support from teachers and high student enrolments and called for the continuation of the courses.
- 8.5 Concern was expressed about the potential for repetition if the Stage 3 curriculum is finalised before the Stage 4 courses are developed.
- 8.6 The proposal in the framing paper for an Extension history course, offered nationally, was very strongly supported.

9.0 Historical inquiry and skills

- 9.1 Respondents noted that there appeared to be too much emphasis on content over historical inquiry and skills. There were repeated calls for a more appropriate balance.
- 9.2 It was recommended that the curriculum should increase its focus on inquiry methodology, and provide more guidance for teachers in this area. It was argued that an inquiry approach would assist students to develop a range of valuable historical skills, not only those related to source work.
- 9.3 Respondents suggested that the concepts of 'historical understanding' should be further refined into skills associated with reaching an historical understanding. This was seen as being of particular benefit to inexperienced teachers. Reference was made to skills related to comprehension, analysis, perspectives and interpretations, empathetic understanding, research skills and communication. A sequenced development of skills across all stages was a key recommendation.

10.0 Cross curriculum connections/interdisciplinary approaches

- 10.1 Cross-curriculum concerns were expressed in relation to both the primary and secondary areas.
- 10.2 The nature of primary schooling was raised as an issue that required more consideration. Respondents noted that primary teachers cover all subjects and that integrated programs were common in many primary schools.

- 10.3 There was strong concern from some respondents about the impact of a separate history curriculum on the interdisciplinary learning opportunities offered in the SOSE (Studies of Society and Environment) learning area.
- 10.4 The cross-curriculum implications outlined in the framing paper were generally supported. There was a fear however that cross-curriculum perspectives may be imposed in an artificial way on the history curriculum. It was suggested that cross-curriculum priorities be included, but not through prescription.
- 10.5 Civics and citizenship was viewed as an essential component.
- 10.6 There were some requests for gender, multicultural and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives to be included.

11.0 The articulation of history as a discipline

- 11.1 Respondents were generally positive about the representation of the discipline of history in the framing paper. It was felt that the relationship of the past to the present and the future needed to be more explicit.
- 11.2 Some respondents expressed a desire to see more emphasis on the 'contestable' nature of historical interpretation.
- 11.3 The importance of archaeology to the study of history was affirmed, with some respondents preferring archaeology to be recognised as a complementary, rather than 'ancillary' discipline.
- 11.4 Many respondents commended the 'historical understandings' outlined in the framing paper, with a few requests for specific clarification of meaning and application. There was some concern that these had not flowed through into the content proposed for Stages 1-3.

Other considerations

The following issues relating to implementation have been identified. These are outside the remit of the Board but are included for noting:

- Respondents called for the allocation of hours to be settled upon before the writing of the history curriculum commences. Advice was given that the history curriculum should not be developed in isolation from assessment.
- Teacher training was identified as a key concern, at the pre-service level and through the ongoing professional development of teachers. Respondents noted that the new history curriculum will present challenges to all teachers, but particularly for teachers of primary and the Studies of Society and Environment (SOSE) learning area.
- The need to effectively resource the new curriculum was frequently raised. Respondents expressed a desire for the provision of templates and model units to guide teachers, for example in the teaching of skills of historical inquiry and historiography. It was noted that any new senior courses would demand a very considerable effort in their development.

Addressing feedback requiring further examination

The table that follows identifies the actions that have or will take place in response to the key issues that have emerged from the consultation feedback. In addition, information will be included identifying the source of the feedback.

5. Addressing feedback requiring further examination

The analysed data from the consultation is summarised in tabular form below organised according to recurring themes arising from the feedback data.

Please refer to the table below for a more in-depth analysis of the actions conducted and proposed in order to address stakeholders' affirmations and feedback received in the consultation of the History Framing Paper

| No | Issue | Source | Action for consideration |
|----|----------------------------|---|---|
| 1. | Engagement value | Academics Business & industry stakeholders Community members Education authorities Education authority – individual Principal Professional associations – teachers (national) Teachers | <p>Action 1 The curriculum will include depth studies for Years 7-10. Depth studies will provide options, where appropriate, which may include comparative options and a school developed option.</p> <p>The identification of these depth studies will enable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • content and skills to be matched to the interest and conceptual level of students • teachers to have flexibility to suit the needs of their students • content to be rationalised to prevent superficial treatment of issues and repetition. (1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.6) <p>Action 2 Advice was sought to further rework Years 3-6 taking account of the feedback from the consultation. (1.2, 1.3, 1.4)</p> <p>Action 3 Specific instructions will be provided to the history advisory panel and to the writers to ensure opportunities are provided for practical history. (1.5)</p> |
| 2. | The field of world history | Academics Business & industry stakeholder Community member Education authorities Education authority – individual Professional associations – teachers (national) Teachers Union | <p>Action 1 World history content will be covered from K-12. Writers will be instructed to develop depth studies to ensure that there is a balanced approach, including opportunities to study events, personalities and groups, historical periods and societies (2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4).</p> |

| No | Issue | Source | Action for consideration |
|----|--|--|---|
| 3. | Scope of content and allocation of hours | Academics Business & industry stakeholders Community members Education authorities Education authority – individual Parent Principal Professional associations – principals Professional associations – teachers (national) Teachers Union | <p>Action 1 Advice was sought to further rework Years 3-6 taking account of the feedback from the consultation. Writers will be instructed to develop content that is manageable for teachers. (3.1)</p> <p>Action 2 Recommendations regarding time allocation will be drawn to the attention of the writers. (3.2, 3.3)</p> <p>Action 3 Depth studies will provide options, where appropriate, which may include comparative options and a school developed option. (3.1, 3.4, 3.5)</p> |
| 4. | Selection of content | Academics Business & industry stakeholders Community members Education authorities Education authority – individual Principal Professional associations – teachers (national) Teachers Undergraduate teacher Union Youth leader | <p>Action 1 The history advisory panel and the curriculum writers will consider the feedback when developing the broad scope and sequence for the history curriculum. (4.1, 4.4, 4.6, 4.8, 4.9)</p> <p>Action 2 Some comparative studies will be included in the options to ensure that provision is made for studies of continents beyond Australia and Europe. (4.2)</p> <p>Action 3 Advice will be sought from advisory panel members with expertise in Indigenous Australian history throughout the curriculum development process. (4.3)</p> <p>Action 4 Primary teachers who wish to introduce contestability will not be prevented from doing so. (4.5)</p> <p>Action 5 Opportunities to study social history have been included in the curriculum for both primary and secondary. (4.6)</p> <p>Action 6 The term ‘a local study’ can apply to the local suburb, the city or a region. (4.7)</p> |
| 5. | Organisation of content | Academics Business & industry stakeholders Community member Education authorities Education authority – individual Principals Professional associations – teachers (national) Teachers Union | <p>Action 1 The chronological approach as an overview for Years 7-10 has been retained. (5.1)</p> <p>Action 2 Advice was sought to further rework Years 3-6 taking account of the feedback from the consultation. Writers will be instructed to develop content that is manageable for teachers. (5.2)</p> <p>Action 3 A theme – ‘the nature of history, role and methodologies of the historian’ – has been included in Years 7-10 from which the writers will be able to develop an introductory unit. (5.3)</p> <p>Action 4 Writers will be given specific instructions to consider issues of repetition across K-12. (5.4, 5.5)</p> |

| No | Issue | Source | Action for consideration |
|----|---|--|---|
| 6. | Conceptual difficulty of the content | Academics Business & industry stakeholders Community member Education authorities Education authority – individual Professional association – principals Professional associations – teachers (national) Teachers | <p>Action 1 Advice was sought to further rework Years 3–6 taking account of the feedback from the consultation. Writers will be instructed to develop content that is manageable for teachers. A series of appropriate studies will be outlined for inclusion in K-12. Consideration will be given to students’ conceptual ability. (6.1, 6.2, 6.3)</p> <p>Action 2 The standards have been removed. Achievement standards will be written in conjunction with the content during the curriculum development process. (6.4)</p> |
| 7. | The overview, bridging, study in depth components | Academics Business & industry stakeholders Education authorities Education authority – individual Professional association – principals Professional associations – teachers (national) Teachers Union | <p>Action 1 Advice was sought to further consider this issue. The term bridging has been removed. (7.1, 7.2, 7.3)</p> <p>Action 2 Revisions were made to indicate that in primary there will be a balanced treatment of breadth and depth. The terms ‘overview’ and ‘study in depth’ will apply only to secondary. (7.4)</p> <p>Action 3 This section of the description for ‘overview’ has been removed. (7.5)</p> <p>Action 4 Specific instructions will be given to the writers to consider the number of depth studies according to considerations of feasibility, conceptual ability and student engagement. (7.6)</p> |
| 8. | The nature and duration of the senior courses | Academics Business & industry stakeholders Community member Education authorities Education authority – individual Principals Professional associations – principal Professional associations – teachers (national) Teachers | <p>Action 1 There will be further advice for writers about the nature of the curriculum in the senior secondary years and key considerations for the development of the curriculum. (8.1 – 8.6)</p> |

| No | Issue | Source | Action for consideration |
|-----|--|--|--|
| 9. | Historical inquiry and skills | Academics Business & industry stakeholders Community member Education authorities Education authority – individual Principal Professional associations – teachers (national) Teachers Union | <p>Action 1 A preliminary list of historical skills has been included for Years 3-6 and Years 7-10. Further work in this area will be taken up by the writers. (9.1)</p> <p>Action 2 A description of historical inquiry as a teaching methodology has been included. (9.2)</p> <p>Action 3 Content in the national history curriculum will be organised with reference to historical knowledge, understandings and skills. Each will be described developmentally. Further research will be undertaken during the early writing phase. (9.3)</p> |
| 10. | Cross-curriculum connections/ interdisciplinary approaches | Academics Business & industry stakeholders Community member Education authorities Education authority – individual Principal Professional associations – principal Professional associations – teachers (national) Teachers Union | <p>Action 1 General capabilities will be explicitly addressed in history as described in The Shape of the National Curriculum paper. (10.1)</p> <p>Action 2 Specific instructions will be given to the writers to indicate how connections can be made between the learning areas. (10.2, 10.3, 10.4)</p> <p>Action 3 The writers' instructions will include the necessity to incorporate civics and citizenship as appropriate. (10.5)</p> <p>Action 4 The advisory panels and the curriculum writers will discuss and resolve the best ways to strengthen gender, multicultural and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives in the curriculum where appropriate. (10.6)</p> |

| No | Issue | Source | Action for consideration |
|-----|---|---|---|
| 11. | The articulation of history as a discipline | Academics Business & industry stakeholders Education authorities Education authority- individual Principal Professional associations – principals Professional associations – teachers (national) Teachers | <p>Action 1 The Introduction has been redrafted to make clear the connections between the past and future. (11.1)</p> <p>Action 2 The history advisory panel and the curriculum writers will consider the contestable nature of historical interpretation and will emphasise it in the history curriculum, where appropriate. (11.2)</p> <p>Action 3 Archaeology is now referred to as a ‘complementary’ discipline to history. (11.3)</p> <p>Action 4 The history advisory panel and the curriculum writers will discuss and resolve how to best ensure that historical understandings are developed and included in the content and achievement standards, as appropriate. (11.4)</p> |
| | Other considerations | Academics Business & industry stakeholders Community member Education authorities Education authority – individual Principal Professional associations – principals Professional associations – teachers (national) Teachers Union | <p>Action 1 Referred to the National Curriculum Board for further deliberation.</p> <p>Action 2 Further collaboration with the states and territories about the nature, delivery and funding of professional development and support materials will be undertaken to support the implementation of the new curriculum.</p> |

6. Summary of submissions

The National History Curriculum: Framing Paper

Consultation period: October 2008 – February 2009

Data as at 27 March 2009

| Submissions | |
|-------------|------------|
| English | 87 |
| Mathematics | 67 |
| Science | 78 |
| History | 82 |
| | 314 |

| Surveys | |
|-------------|------------|
| English | 246 |
| Mathematics | 159 |
| Science | 192 |
| History | 220 |
| | 817 |

| Total of all feedback | |
|-----------------------|-------------|
| English | 333 |
| Mathematics | 226 |
| Science | 270 |
| History | 302 |
| | 1131 |

7. Appendix: What the community said in response to NCB questions

Question 1: To what extent do you agree with the aims of the national history curriculum?

Quantitative responses

| Strongly disagree | Disagree | Agree | Strongly agree |
|-------------------|----------|-------|----------------|
| 4% | 7% | 41% | 48% |

Qualitative responses

There was considerable support for the aims in the history framing paper. There were some concerns about their ambitious nature and the relative importance of content and skills in the aims.

- *We found all the statements in the AIMS section outstanding and particularly liked [21] with the emphasis on a futures orientation, [22] the recognition of cultural differences [24] the development of critical perspectives [26] the introduction to world history and [28] the development of skills to extend knowledge. (Business or Industry professional)*
- *The aims are certainly noble, but my concern is, Are they achievable within the time allocated to the teaching of history. Even if the time was to be extended to 100hrs, incursions and other disruptions will curtail this. I would suggest the aims need to be refined further. (Education professional – Teacher)*
- *I agree with what the Aims mean, but believe they should be expressed in a way that better connects with the range of learners intended. Paragraphs 25 and 26 in particular seem to bypass younger learners – HOW will they be able to ‘grasp’ the major phases of history and the transformations that determined them? Phrases that refer to stage-appropriate understanding or engagement may help to bridge what I see as a gap between the curriculum and the learner. (Education professional – Curriculum director)*
- *While I agree with the aims, I feel that framing paper privileges the recognition of knowledge of content over key historical skills such as analysis and interpretation of sources, critical evaluations, building argument and synthesising content. (Educational professional – departmental/sector representative)*
- *These are excellent aims as the end point of the schooling process, however stage-specific aims (or outcomes) will need to be stated in final curriculum documents. (Educational professional teacher)*

Question 2: This section of the paper proposes three components to incorporate into the national history curriculum: **Overview, Bridging and Study in depth**. To what extent do you agree with these components?

Quantitative responses

| Strongly disagree | Disagree | Agree | Strongly agree |
|-------------------|----------|-------|----------------|
| 4% | 12% | 42% | 42% |

Qualitative responses

While there was general agreement with the approach, respondents frequently questioned the ‘bridging’ component. Concerns focussed on how these components would work in practise, particularly in the primary; and the number and duration of depth studies that would be required.

- *I believe these components will present an unnecessary complication for most teachers. There is no significant distinction between overview and bridging studies. Overview and depth studies would be more practical for teachers in terms of programming and teaching and learning practices. (Education professional – Curriculum director)*

- I endorse the 'Overview' and the 'Study in Depth' components. However, 'Bridging' implies a single strand, or one route which could be misleading. Therefore, I would prefer the term 'Contextual Study'. (Education professional – Curriculum director)
- The terms are fine. The study in depth needs more direction due to the need for teacher planning to develop the right emphasis and time allocation for the units. (Education professional – School administrator)
- From a primary school perspective, especially Stage 1, the suggested approach would not be suitable. Primary history should serve as an introduction to the content, skills and understandings that students will approach in more depth later on. (Educational professional – Teacher)
- Fine except that not all teaching approaching an overview need necessarily 'typically' involve 'substantial teacher exposition'. There are alternative approaches. It is simplistic to equate these two. (Educational professional – Teacher)
- All three components are important. The topics we currently study are perhaps not large enough to require an overview. Agree that bridging and studying a topic in depth is vital. (Business or Industry professional)
- Inclusion of bridging studies as a component rather than leaving it to teachers to enhance understanding by referencing other people/places/events as they determine necessary to enhance understanding – will add another complexity and may lead to confusion rather than clarity.
- Not satisfied that each has been satisfactorily explained. My discussions with colleagues and students reveals a range of understanding about overview and bridging - and the kind of treatment each would require. I like the 'old' 'survey and depth' approach yearly syllabus'. How much time could be given to a 'depth study'? (Education professional – Teacher)

Question 3: To what extent do you agree with the proposals for incorporating a futures orientation?

Quantitative responses

| Strongly disagree | Disagree | Agree | Strongly agree |
|-------------------|----------|-------|----------------|
| 6% | 8% | 38% | 48% |

Qualitative responses

The futures orientation was endorsed by most respondents without much further comment. There were a few other respondents who made a wide variety of comments about the appropriateness of the aims.

- We strongly agree with a futures orientation and global approach. Placing Australia within the world is a key to understanding Australian history. Perhaps the lack of this placement has contributed to students' seeing Australian history as 'boring'. (Business or industry professional)
- I agree that while some familiarity with Australian History is advisable as is familiarity with the Asia Pacific region a critical view of the legacy of European history (including colonialism) is also important. (Education professional – Teacher)
- Putting Australian history in a global context is very important. Leaving enough room in the curriculum after teaching all of these things to ensure all aspects of civics and citizenship education, for example, is important too. Futures studies can be enabled in multiple ways including by the study of history. (Academic)
- Stressing the relevance of the past to the present and the future is a crucial aspect of encouraging engagement with history. (Education professional – School administrator)

- It is difficult to agree with the aims here, since they are not clearly stated, and the emphases not adequately identified. The statement is a combination of aims (e.g. paragraphs 20, 23, 24, 27 and 28), rationales (para. 21), suggestions for teaching (paras 25, 26) and observations about students experience (para 22). This section is unlikely to be a sufficiently clear guide to curriculum writers or others needing to know they key intended outcomes of the history curriculum (Academic)
- I find this heading bizarre. What has the term 'futures orientation' got to do with the content that follows that is focussed on globalisation, not the 'future'. (Business or industry professional)

Question 4: To what extent do you agree with proposed components of historical understanding?

Quantitative responses

| Strongly disagree | Disagree | Agree | Strongly agree |
|-------------------|----------|-------|----------------|
| 0% | 7% | 33% | 60% |

Qualitative responses

Very strong support was expressed for the components of historical understanding. Some respondents recommended that the concepts be further developed by identifying related historical skills.

- These historic understandings need to be unpacked and simplified with resources provided for non-history teachers. There needs to be realistic expectations, and the content needs to be practical and user friendly, especially in the lower stages. (Educational professional – curriculum manager)
- Much greater need to introduce the concept of research and being the detective. Kids love handling and questioning the evidence, these are important skills. This section needs to talk about how to question evidence and artefacts, what do you look for and what is needed to justify a finding. (Education professional – Curriculum manager)
- We agree with the proposed components of historical understanding. However, greater clarification is required on the implementation of these components. Will each stage be required to address each component? How will the attainment of the components be measured? (Education professional – Teacher)
- We appreciate that these components of historical understanding are important to develop across each student's schooling. However, we think many of the areas would be difficult to develop in Primary School, particularly the early years. We'd like to hear how it is proposed this would be achieved. (Education professional – Teacher)
- The basic conceptual underpinnings of the framing paper are to be commended. It is firmly based on recent research of history pedagogy and student learning in history. It is reassuring in its acknowledgement of History as a separate subject with distinct concepts, historical thinking and relevant skills and that it should hold a central place in the school curriculum. (Educational professional – Curriculum manager)
- This section does have a somewhat clinical feel to it, which could be balanced by including more overt references to the integral role of the following in making History an exciting field of study, thereby enhancing the development of historical understanding: experiencing and constructing narratives (including 'stories'); having the imagination stirred and investigating the lives, actions, achievements and failures of real people. (Academic)

Question 5: To what extent do you agree with the proposed cross-curriculum implications for national history curriculum?

Quantitative responses

| Strongly disagree | Disagree | Agree | Strongly agree |
|-------------------|----------|-------|----------------|
| 2% | 10% | 48% | 40% |

Qualitative responses

Cross curricular perspectives such as literacy and numeracy were strongly supported. There was still some concern that the integrity of historical study may be compromised by cross curricular approaches, particularly if prescribed.

- *Literacy and research skills are best taught through the discipline of history - more so than any other subject. History has also found a very crucial role in teaching the critical evaluation analysis and use of the internet.* (Education professional – Departmental / sector representative)
- *This section effectively demonstrates that a study of history has great capacity to complement and enhance a range of cross-curricular perspectives and selected curriculum learning areas. I particularly like the highlighting in Point 43 of the need to preserve the integrity of the study of History and to avoid the watering down/ trivialization /expunction of history teaching by subverting it to other ends. I would prefer to see the reference to the National Statement for Engaging Young Australians with Asia removed from Point 51, where it tends to reinforce the difficult to dislodge stereotype that studies of Asia and studies of Asian languages are one and the same thing.* (Academic)
- *OK to include, 'relevant elements', but languages and creative arts are a bit of a stretch* (Educational professional – Curriculum director)
- *I agree that History crosses into other curriculum areas – that is very often the nature of any humanities subject. I am concerned that this will provide an opening for schools to say that history will be part of an integrated study rather than a separate discipline.* (Educational professional – Teacher)
- *Languages – links with LOTE are dubious and tenuous. Where links occur naturally they should be fostered and encouraged but not forced.* ((Educational professional – curriculum manager)
- *A cross curriculum statement on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples should be included. It should specify the knowledge and understandings of Indigenous peoples and cultures, both in Australia and internationally.* (Education authority)

Question 6: This section of the paper proposes some guidelines for the structure of the national history curriculum. To what extent do you agree with these proposals?

Quantitative responses

| Strongly disagree | Disagree | Agree | Strongly agree |
|-------------------|----------|-------|----------------|
| 1% | 7% | 51% | 41% |

Qualitative responses

The structure of the curriculum was strongly supported. Many respondents were still concerned about the potential for repetition, there was some further questioning of the bridging component and requests for more clarification in relation to flexibility.

- *I agree however these are very broad guidelines. What does 'flexibility' imply? Will there be a core mandatory overview and a choice of studies in depth which are more open-ended?* (Education professional – Teacher)

- *In order for the proposed curriculum to be covered there is going to be a strong reliance on overview and bridging - students may become disinterested in this structure. I welcome the idea that the course should be flexible - course outlines not excessively prescriptive. It is hark back to the old days where teachers could use their skills and teach. Not sure that school administrations will welcome such flexibility.* (Education professional – Teacher)
- *I agree totally with the structure statements but I do not think you follow them in the proposed curriculum stage programs of study. It is noted (paragraph 59) that excessive repetition is the students' big complaint, particularly of Australian history, then you provide nothing but Australian history up to the end of primary school. To get proper historical understanding our students need to be exposed to different histories much earlier than yr 7 (your stage 3).* (Education professional – Teacher)
- *While there are claims of being setup to avoid excessive repetition there does seem to be some overlap of the Australian history focused section. There is little sense of flexibility in the latter stages/units. The curriculum should also allow for different learning styles.* (Education professional – Teacher)
- *This is a highly productive vision for history curriculum. It is grounded in research (the distinction between the substantive and the procedural is helpful). Furthermore, there is a strong sense of the ways in which the document will be used to plan for teaching. The emphasis on cohesion and the determination to avoid repetition are commendable.* (Principle registering students)

Question 7: To what extent do you agree with the proposed national history curriculum for Stage 1 of schooling?

Quantitative responses

| Strongly disagree | Disagree | Agree | Strongly agree |
|-------------------|----------|-------|----------------|
| 5% | 15% | 43% | 37% |

Qualitative responses

The Stage 1 proposal received very limited comment. While there was support for the proposal, the conceptual difficulty of the concepts of time were frequently highlighted.

- *I would like to see this age group able to identify and understand some common ways in which life has changed from their grandparents to parents to their generation (e.g. food, community entertainment, clothing, health issues, disasters/celebrations, schooling). This does not mean they have to have access to their family - bring visitors of those generations to the kids or kids to them.* (Academic)
- *This statement appears to be very vague and lacking in substance - exactly what are Stage 1 students going to study? Where are the Asian perspectives if we are going to embrace 'Engaging students with studies of Asia'?* (Education professional – Teacher)
- *Literacy and numeracy demands are significant and should be closely aligned with other curriculums to ensure consistency. Measurement of historical time such as decade, century, ancient, modern, AD, BC, CE are too sophisticated at this stage.* (Education authority)
- *Even very young children will enjoy history if it is presented in a way they can understand and be interested in. Young children are generally introduced to History through 'story' and hands-on activities and visits to historical or heritage places. This section of the paper does not acknowledge this strongly enough.* (Educational professional – professional organisation)

Question 8: To what extent do you agree with the proposed national history curriculum for Stage 2 of schooling?

Quantitative responses

| Strongly disagree | Disagree | Agree | Strongly agree |
|-------------------|----------|-------|----------------|
| 6% | 20% | 47% | 27% |

Qualitative responses

Respondents noted a range of concerns with the Stage 2 proposal. Some of these included the emphasis on Australian history, the lack of social history and the scope of the content.

- *It is pleasing to see that in general there is little change from the overall intention of most current primary curricula. There is a focus on the historical background of the local area and how this links with national history (and global where necessary). The four units are themed and make it possible to integrate other material. (Educational professional – Teacher)*
- *It will be very important to ensure that there is not too much overlap between the Australian history that is taught in this stage and that which will be covered in the latter two years of Stage 3. This will need to be clarified in the draft. (Educational professional – Teacher)*
- *The exclusion of other material other than Australian history in this stage is a mistake. I think younger students need to be introduced to world history so that they can understand Australian history. (Educational professional – Teacher)*
- *This section is the most problematic of the paper. It is not clear. The 5 questions are too broad; there is overlap with Stage 3. Stage 2 has links to civics and citizenship, but feedback from primary teachers based on their experiences with the teaching of civics and citizenship indicates that many students will not engage with much of the content. There is danger that the Australian history taught will be repeated not only within the stages in stages 3 and 4 but within Stage 2 itself. This is very insular at a time when students are receptive to the wonder of the wider world. (Education authority)*
- *The topics, themes and sheer quantity of content is not appropriate for such young children. They could not begin to grasp such concepts and apply them historically. (Education professional – Teacher)*

Question 9: To what extent do you agree with the proposed national history curriculum for Stage 3 of schooling?

Quantitative responses

| Strongly disagree | Disagree | Agree | Strongly agree |
|-------------------|----------|-------|----------------|
| 12% | 20% | 41% | 27% |

Qualitative responses

The Stage 3 proposal attracted the most feedback. The chronological approach was endorsed by the majority although there were a wide range of concerns about engagement value, the scope of content, the potential for repetition and the need for options.

- *The Stage 3 discussion as a whole treats Asia as one region among many which should be included when global relationships and references are discussed. This ignores the special place of Asia which is evident in the draft Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians and in other policy documents. Asia has a particular significance to Australia, and unless this significance is recognized in the Stage 3 history curriculum, it is difficult to see where it will be recognised within the subject. (Education professional – Curriculum director)*

- *I am so excited by the nature of this course. It is excellent to see the common sense chronology of ancient, medieval, early and late modern, and eventually to Australia.*
(Educational professional – Teacher)
- *Assuming that each unit corresponds to a year of schooling, there seems to be far too much content to fit into 100 indicative hours. To cover every area mentioned would not leave time for the studies in depth and 7-10 will become one big race to fit everything in. While comparative ‘world history’ is good, some choice to limit how many comparisons will be needed.* (Education professional – Teacher)
- *The idea that students will cover such broad areas as currently envisaged for Stage 3, Units 1 and 2, is breathtaking. It puts at risk the all-important engagement with the past that is currently nurtured at this stage of development. This is the point at which thirteen-year-old minds are ‘hooked’. The proposed syllabus offers students in their first year at secondary school, humankind’s foraging and agrarian eras over a period of more than 600 centuries, with the prospect of studying during the entirety of their second year, a continuation of the agrarian era (over a period of two and a half centuries), with the promise of the modern era to come in their third year. It is the sheer breadth of this vision that is likely to anaesthetise students. Allow teachers, after introducing a broad survey of the eras, the opportunity to spend greater time on Case studies which would both allow them to draw upon their own expertise, and allow the students the time to engage with the material.* (Academic)
- *Secondary teachers are generally comfortable with what has been proposed in terms of the overall organisation into four chronological periods and the approach to Australian history. However, there are too many topics listed and no clear guidelines on the selection and weighting of topics for study. The overly-ambitious nature of the suggested content outline has worrying implications for pedagogy and articulation with Stage 4 courses* (Professional association)

Question 10: To what extent do you agree with the proposed national history curriculum for Stage 4 of schooling?

Quantitative responses

| Strongly disagree | Disagree | Agree | Strongly agree |
|-------------------|----------|-------|----------------|
| 17% | 23% | 40% | 20% |

Qualitative responses

The proposal for Stage 4 was the least supported section of the history framing paper. Respondents welcomed the variety of courses on offer, with very strong support for an Extension history course. Many respondents were concerned about the lack of detail, the provision of one year only courses and the potential for overlap with the Stage 3 course.

- *This is so vague it provides no clear understanding of what is to be implemented. What options will remain available? Will there be a core study are questions yet to be answered?*
(Education professional – Teacher)
- *Although there is not much detail here, it seems that it will contribute to a higher-quality, more rigorous academic culture in senior history and this is a welcome development. The curriculum must be structured to engage students and teachers with current debates in history and make students aware that they are part of an international community of scholars.* (Academic)
- *Year 11 should be a preliminary year to the HSC. So many students now come from overseas that they need a year to settle into the Australian view of History study.* (Education professional – Teacher)
- *How the overlap of content in junior and senior courses will impact on the study of history in the senior years requires clarification. The proposal of a History Extension course is to be commended.*
(Education authority)

- *While I agree that history at the senior level should be non compulsory, the sequence of Stage 4 is illogical. The program of study at this level is not well explained at all.*
(Education professional – Teacher)
- *Most states and territories currently run courses that enjoy considerable popularity amongst students and generate loyalty amongst teachers. While this does not mean that the courses are incapable of being improved or adapted to a national curriculum, the stakes are high and there is justifiable anxiety about a proposal that is so lacking in detail.* (Professional association)
- *This section is difficult to understand. The recommendation for all units to be of one year’s duration cuts across current practice in the senior school in all states and territories. The proposals also appear to make it impossible to offer a two-year course in Ancient History, as currently offered in Queensland, for example.* (Education professional – Curriculum director)