

MEDIA RELEASE

National Curriculum Journey Begins

Friday 2 May 2008

Deputy Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, welcomed Professor Barry McGaw AO, Chair of the National Curriculum Board, Mr Tony Mackay, Deputy Chair, and other Board members to its historic inaugural meeting, held in Canberra on Wednesday, 23 April.

The Interim National Curriculum Board comprises representatives from each of the States and Territories, and three representatives from the Catholic and Independent schools sectors.

Professor McGaw spoke highly of his colleagues saying that the Board's membership provides a very good balance of teaching experience, curriculum expertise, links with the vocational education and training sector and educational research.

"The Board has moved immediately on its first priority which is to develop a national curriculum in English, mathematics, the sciences and history," he said.

"This will be a collaborative process, with Australia working together to produce a world-class curriculum.

"Consultation will begin with a stakeholder forum in Melbourne on 27 June that will focus on the form of the curriculum to be delivered.

"Participants will consider, for example, the best relationships between content and outcomes, between common national content and regional variation and between curriculum specification and school and teacher discretion.

"In preparation for this consultation, the Board's staff will gather what the Australian state and territory education systems think are the best of their current curricula and samples of the curricula from other high-performing countries such as Finland, Canada, Hong Kong-China and Singapore."

In her discussion with the Board, the Deputy Prime Minister reinforced the importance of the collaborative process it is undertaking, and the essential role that Australian and international evidence will play in creating a national curriculum which underpins world class education outcomes.

"We have a rare opportunity here to create a curriculum which helps achieve educational excellence across the whole community and it should be shaped by the best material and experience there is," Ms Gillard said.

Widespread consultation will help the Board shape writing instructions to the experts it appoints to draft the national curriculum in English, mathematics, the sciences and history.

Professor McGaw emphasised that the Board has already determined that these writing instructions will include the use of plain English so that everyone, from academics to beginning teachers to community members, will understand what our nation's schools are teaching.

“Curriculum writers are often tempted to write for one another but ours will write in plain English and with a limit to the length of their documents to ensure that they are useful to practising teachers,” he said.

For more information on the Interim National Curriculum Board, contact:

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List of Interim National Curriculum Board Members		
Name	Position	Organisation
Professor Barry McGaw	Director	Melbourne Education Research Institute, University of Melbourne
Mr Tony Mackay	Executive Director	Centre for Strategic Education
Mr Tom Alegounarias	Chief Executive	New South Wales Institute of Teachers
Mr John Firth	Chief Executive Officer	Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority
Mr Kim Bannikoff	Director	Queensland Studies Authority
Professor Bill Loudon	Dean of Education	University of Western Australia
Ms Helen Wildash	Executive Director, Curriculum	South Australian Department of Education and Children's Services
Mr David Hanlon	Former Deputy Secretary	Tasmanian Department of Education
Ms Rita Henry	Executive Director, Central Australia	Northern Territory Department of Employment, Education and Training
Ms Janet Davy	Deputy Chief Executive	Australian Capital Territory Department of Education and Training
Dr Brian Croke	Executive Director	Catholic Education Commission New South Wales
Professor Marie Emmitt	Dean of Faculty of Education	Australian Catholic University National
Mr Garry Le Duff	Executive Director	Association of Independent Schools of South Australia