

STATEMENT

FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND ASSEMBLY REMAIN IN THE DRAFT AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM

3 May 2021

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On Monday 3 May, *The Daily Telegraph* published a story in which it claimed that “the proposed curriculum would replace teaching about the rights to free speech, assembly and religious belief with language encouraging activism and 'direct action'.”

This statement is not true.

While the proposed changes to the Civics and Citizenship curriculum in the [Australian Curriculum Review](#) add a reference to various modes of civic and political engagement, this has not come at the expense of references to important democratic freedoms such as freedom of speech and assembly. Explaining how democratic freedoms, such as freedom of speech or assembly, support active participation in Australia’s democracy is part of the Year 7 proposed curriculum, whereas in the current curriculum this reference is in Year 8. In other words, this important content has been moved, not removed altogether (as suggested by the story) as part of resequencing of the proposed Civics and Citizenship curriculum.

Had *The Daily Telegraph* contacted ACARA, this fact would have been pointed out to the journalist.

As regards recent discussion of the place of Australia’s Christian heritage in the curriculum, it should be noted that the Rationale in the proposed Australian Curriculum in Civics and Citizenship for Years 7–10, which sets out the overarching framework within which the content should be interpreted, states the Australian Curriculum “recognises that Australia is a secular nation with a culturally diverse, multi-faith society and a Christian heritage.” It also notes that “emphasis is placed on the federal system of government, derived from the Westminster system, and the liberal democratic values that underpin it, such as freedom, equality and the rule of law” and that the curriculum “provides students with opportunities to investigate political and legal systems, and explore the nature of citizenship, diversity and identity in contemporary society.”

Content elaborations in the proposed curriculum include “appreciating the cultural and historical foundations of Australia's Christian heritage and their impact on Australian political and legal systems” and “identifying Christian traditions and values that have influenced the development of Australian society, democracy and law, including the positive and negative

impacts upon First Nations Australian communities and other groups within Australian society.”

[The Shape of the Australian Curriculum](#) paper, which guides the development of the Australian Curriculum, was updated for this Review to explicitly include reference to the traditions and values of Western civilisation and to the curriculum's role in building national community.

It states:

"The Australian Curriculum exemplifies a shared commitment to high expectations of achievement across the country, to respectful and rational discussion of different perspectives, values and beliefs, and to democratic processes as the means of promoting the common good of all.

"The Australian Curriculum must ensure young people have a good understanding of the nature of Australian society within which they will be living and working as adults. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges and perspectives are an important part of the development of our nation, as are the traditions and values of what is often referred to as 'Western society'."

All feedback on the proposed revisions to the Australian Curriculum is welcome during this public consultation phase. It will feed into amendments to the final revised curriculum for ministers' consideration and determination.

Feedback is being sought via the new [consultation website](#) from 29 April 2021 until 8 July 2021. The updated version of the F–10 Australian Curriculum, once approved by ministers, will be made available on a new Australian Curriculum website at the start of 2022.