



Briefing Papers

Curriculum Portfolio

The Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Australia, ICPA (Aust), is a voluntary, apolitical, national parent organisation working on behalf of our members for equity of access to appropriate education for children living outside of metropolitan areas. ICPA (Aust) is committed to ensuring that the national curriculum considers the unique needs of rural and remote students and the contexts in which they are educated and reside.

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SUMMARY

1. All sectors of agriculture including food and fibre production be embedded in the Australian Curriculum.
2. Safe driving practices to be added to curriculum.
3. National Assessment Program – Literacy And Numeracy (NAPLAN) – considerations for rural and remote students.
4. Any changes to the content of the National Curriculum be accompanied by funding to the States and Territories, to enable the development of independent specialised learning course materials for distance education students.

ISSUE 1 - Agriculture in the Australian Curriculum

ICPA (Aust) seeks to ensure that a broad range of subject matter specifically related to Primary Production be embedded in the Australian Curriculum and taught to all students in schools across Australia to create a better opportunity for understanding and awareness of the significance of agriculture in Australia, where food and fibre comes from and how it is produced. ICPA (Aust) seeks to ensure that subject matter, related to food and fibre production, are included when Agriculture is taught by teachers in their classes. It is becoming increasingly apparent that there are misconceptions and misunderstandings around agricultural production in Australia. Our members feel this is a direct result of the actual “where, why and how” of producing food and fibre being omitted from the Australian Curriculum in favour of topics such as sustainability and environment in relation to “agricultural science”.



Agriculture and in particular, food and fibre production, is a critical part of the Australian economy and social framework, contributing more than \$60 billion to the Australian economy in 2017 and employing more than 1.6 million people across the supply chain, as well as producing almost 93% of Australia's daily domestic food supply <https://www.nff.org.au/farm-facts.html>. ICPA members feel it is essential that Australians are aware of the significance of agriculture in Australia, where their food and fibre comes from and how it is produced. The inclusion of specific food and fibre production components would be both a positive and valuable addition to the Australian Curriculum, broadening and enhancing the learning experiences of students and fostering positive understandings of agriculture in Australia.

RECOMMENDATION

That Agricultural Production studies are embedded in the Australian Curriculum and taught to all students in schools across Australia to create a better understanding of how Australian food and fibre is produced.

ISSUE 2 - Safe Driving Practices

ICPA members have requested that topics on safe driving practices be embedded in the secondary curriculum, including:

- defensive driving practices
- safe driving practices
- basic first aid
- basic car maintenance
- obtaining a Learners' Permit.

While lessons in these topics or driving instruction may be available in some towns and metropolitan areas, rural and remote families struggle to access these types of services, leaving instruction up to families to do the best they can to source information and provide learning techniques. By including Safe Driving Practices in the National Curriculum, students would be assured of receiving consistent information and guidance in this very critical skill no matter where they live or the ability of their family to provide instruction.

RECOMMENDATION

That the secondary Australian Curriculum include topics essential to safe driving practices.

ISSUE 3 - National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN)

There are critical issues associated with the delivery and implementation of National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) testing for rural and remote students. With a move to wholly online testing, consideration needs to be given to geographically isolated children who may have a lack of internet access as well as inability to travel to a testing location due to the tyranny of distance. It is imperative that provisions are put in place to accommodate these students. It is also important that the inability to access NAPLAN testing and other external examinations e.g. ACER, ICAS, does not impede a students' eligibility to enrol at the boarding school of their choice.



Further, ICPA (Aust) requests that NAPLAN reporting timeframes should be reduced to enable schools to access students' results in a timely manner to identify the needs of the cohort and individual students and provide necessary support for the specific learning needs of rural and remote students. It is well documented that rural and remote students have unique educational needs and that there is a widening gap between metropolitan and rural and remote students in relation to results of NAPLAN testing.

It is difficult to effect change and improve student outcomes in the calendar year if there is a lengthy delay between assessment and access to results. If teachers and school administrators had access to NAPLAN results in at least term 2, there is a higher likelihood that supports could be made available to address areas of learning need, particularly for rural and remote children who are already educationally disadvantaged.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- That unique circumstances of rural and remote students are taken into consideration in the implementation of the National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN)
- That NAPLAN reporting timeframes are reduced to allow for better support of the specific educational needs of rural and remote students

ISSUE 4 - Funding for Changes to the Content of the National Curriculum

Assurance that ongoing funding will be available to the States and Territories to support any national curriculum changes and enable the development of independent learning course materials for distance education and small rural and remote schools who must implement these changes.

RECOMMENDATION

In order for any changes to the National Curriculum to be implemented effectively and efficiently in rural and remote schools and in distance education contexts, appropriate funding is made available for this to occur.