

School Stakeholder Views on a National Approach to
Teaching History in Three Australian States

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examined the responses of school stakeholders in three Australian states (South Australia, Western Australia and Victoria) to development of the *Australian Curriculum: History (ACHistory)*. These states were selected due to their accessibility for the researcher, past approaches to History education and size. Data were collected through individual interviews with parents, teachers and History Teachers' Association members, and small focus groups with Year 9 and 10 students. These participant groups were selected after identifying them as key school stakeholders: teachers and History Teachers' Association members due to their role in teaching the curriculum in classrooms, students as the recipients of the curriculum, and parents due to their concern for their children's educational outcomes.

Development of the *ACHistory* commenced in 2008 following the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians, agreed to by all state and Commonwealth education authorities. The release of the *Shape of the Australian Curriculum: History* in 2009 launched a series of criticism targeted at the proposed national curriculum. Much of the criticism focused on the role that Australian history would play. The criticisms continued as the *ACHistory* was implemented in schools. The implementation of the *ACHistory* saw the profile of History raised in the media, along with debates about what and how Australian students should be taught about the past. The involvement of Commonwealth in History education, particularly with the announcement of the 2014 review conducted by Kevin Donnelly and Kenneth Wiltshire, led to some concerns about politicisation and the way this could influence the History curriculum.

The objectives of the project were to establish the various opinions held by different school stakeholder groups in the three states on the nature and extent of politicisation of the *ACHistory*, identify differences and commonalities among the views of various school stakeholder groups regarding the direction the History curriculum should take. Triangulation with articles published in the media and academic journals was used to help establish how ideological factors related to political and cultural groups shaped the curriculum, if at all.

While History education was assigned different purposes by various participants it was generally accepted as an important compulsory subject. Australian history, in particular, was considered an important topic that Australian students should study. Generally, the amount of Australian history taught under the *ACHistory* was seen as sufficient, although there were some individual participants who felt it should be adjusted. Alternatively, some participants would have preferred a more local, state-based approach. The ability of the curriculum to cater for the diversity amongst Australian students of different cultural backgrounds and beliefs was unclear, with some teachers holding that this was the responsibility of classroom teachers, not the curriculum. In terms of the development and 2014 review process for the *ACHistory*, despite opportunities existing for school stakeholders to provide feedback, not all were either aware or chose to be involved.

While there was a range of responses, overall, there seemed to be an acceptance that considering the requirement for a national History curriculum to balance the needs of multiple stakeholder groups, the curriculum and the process used to

develop it were, for the most part, adequate. This was a small-scale qualitative study, therefore there is room in the future to investigate how widespread the views of the participants in this study are in a larger number of Australian schools, particularly given that schools would have had more time to adjust to the requirements of the Australian Curriculum, and that states such as Victoria and Western Australia have since chosen to adapt the curriculum to their own local contexts.

DECLARATION

I certify that this work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in my name in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. In addition, I certify that no part of this work will, in the future, be used in a submission in my name for any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution without the prior approval of the University of Adelaide and where applicable, any partner institution responsible for the joint award of this degree.

I give permission for the digital version of my thesis to be made available on the web, via the University's digital research repository, the Library Search and also through web search engines, unless permission has been granted by the University to restrict access for a period of time.

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ACRONYMS and ABBREVIATIONS

ACARA	Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority
DECD	Department for Education and Child Development, South Australia
HTAA	History Teachers' Association of Australia
HTASA	History Teachers' Association of South Australia
HTAV	History Teachers' Association of Victoria
HTAWA	History Teachers' Association of Western Australia
ICSEA	Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage
NAPLAN	National Assessment Program- Literacy and Numeracy
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
SCSA	School Curriculum and Standards Authority, Western Australia
VCAA	Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, Victoria
VELS	Victorian Essential Learning Standards

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Orientation

This is a study of the perspectives held by parents, students, teachers and History Teachers' Association members from three Australian states on the introduction of a national History curriculum in all Australian schools. The focus was primarily on the views of those working in or attached to secondary schools in South Australia, Victoria and Western Australia. Using audio data recorded during individual interviews and student focus groups, I identified the main themes that concerned or interested the participants in this study and compared them with those identified in media and peer-reviewed articles concerning the History curriculum. In this introductory chapter, I explain how my interest in the *Australian Curriculum: History* and the views of school stakeholders developed, briefly describe some of the context surrounding the release of the *Australian Curriculum: History* (referred to from here on as *ACHistory*) and provide some key definitions.

1.1.1 General Statements

The implementation of the *ACHistory* from 2012 saw a shared national History curriculum in Australian schools for the first time. The Australian Curriculum's introduction into schools in Australia resulted in history becoming a compulsory learning area for all school students from Foundation to Year 10, originally as a

discrete subject, and subsequently as part of the Humanities and Social Sciences learning area (HaSS). The Australian Curriculum illustrates a change in the state-federal relationship in education with a move away from state-based curriculum development to one where the Commonwealth played an important part.

This Commonwealth involvement was demonstrated initially through the establishment of the National Curriculum Board in 2008, which was subsequently replaced in 2009 by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), which became the body responsible for the development of the Australian Curriculum. Commonwealth involvement was further demonstrated through the *Review of the Australian Curriculum* (hereafter called the 2014 review) that was initiated by former Commonwealth Education Minister, Christopher Pyne.

One key issue that was investigated in this thesis was the possibility of politicisation influencing the History curriculum itself. In terms of the curriculum being implemented in schools, there appeared to be a perception, demonstrated predominantly through the media and academic writing, that the history curriculum was politicised (Taylor & Collins, 2012a; Taylor & Collins, 2012b). If this perceived politicisation was in fact widespread, it had the potential to cause educational stakeholders and others in society to dismiss History in schools as politically biased. Such a loss of credibility could have become a significant issue for curriculum planners and educational leaders. Politicisation could also have led to instability. With the announcement of the 2014 review, for example, commentators raised concerns that there was the potential for the curriculum to be modified with each change of Commonwealth Government (Forrest, 2014).

The consultation process surrounding the development and the implementation of the *ACHistory* involved ACARA gathering opinions from “a range of educational stakeholders- teachers, principals, governments, state and territory education authorities, professional education associations, community groups and the general public” (Zarmati, 2012, 52). Writing teams for sections of the History curriculum included curriculum professionals from multiple states, and the drafts these writing teams produced were sent on to advisory panels of experts before being released on the ACARA website for public comment. Comments were then sent to an advisory panel who was responsible for incorporating these comments into the document, if there were considered appropriate. The Australian Curriculum as a whole was endorsed by all federal, state and territory education ministers in December 2010 (Zarmati, 2012).

1.1.2 Researcher Disclosure

It is inevitable that the researcher’s background and experiences have influenced this research project in relation to the choice of research topic and the methods used, as well as the interpretation and presentation of the data and the line of argument. At the same time, I have endeavoured to present the data faithfully, as it was received or recorded, and to analyse it fairly, taking account of all the points of view expressed.

I completed my Bachelor of Teaching at The University of Adelaide in 2012 amongst the last cohort to be taught to work from the South Australian Curriculum Standards and Accountability (SACSA) Framework document. While it appeared, our tutors had initially intended to focus predominantly on this

document, most of the schools that we, as preservice teachers, were sent to on practicum were already starting to transition to the Australian Curriculum and this resulted in us being taught to refer to both documents. In this way, I entered the teaching profession in a time of transition, with 2013 being one of the first years that the *ACHistory* was in use. My initial experience of teaching was in a South Australian area school, providing Reception to Year 12 for all the children and young people living in small scattered communities in the surrounding area. It has since closed its doors. Thus, I had personal experience of teaching History across a number of year levels to students whose range of life experience and areas of interest were rooted in their local community.

A further influence in my selection of this research topic was the announcement of the 2014 review at the end of 2013. At the time the 2014 review was announced I was in the process of deciding on my research topic and the large amount of concern about the review, evident amongst the teachers and academics I knew, piqued my interest.

The selection of the states where this study was based was influenced in part by my own background and future plans. I completed my own schooling in South Australia and had begun my teaching career in South Australia, but had made plans to move to Western Australia, so was interested in how the new curriculum was perceived in these two states in particular. It was decided that it would be a good idea to include one of the more populous and resource rich eastern states in the study too. As much of the reporting at the time seemed to be focused on the views of people based in New South Wales (NSW), I selected Victoria. Since Victoria has a reputation for being very progressive, in both its school structures

and its curriculum development (Campbell & Proctor, 2014), it was considered that this would provide a good balance to South Australia and Western Australia, which were both much larger in area and smaller in terms of population.

1.1.3 Definitions

In this section a number of terms that are used throughout this thesis are defined briefly, while overarching terms such as ‘politicisation’ and ‘ideology’ are defined in greater detail and discussed in their relevant context. The brief definitions are listed first, before the expanded definitions that include context.

Cultural Warriors. Cultural warriors are defined as people who actively attempt to preserve and defend a particular culture or set of values that they see as being under threat. In the case of the *ACHistory* there was some discussion of Western values and Judeo-Christian heritage being under attack or neglected.

Judeo-Christian Heritage. The religious and cultural beliefs and cultural values that are shared by both Christianity and Judaism. This term is often used to describe a dominant set of Western values found in both Australia and the United States of America.

Neo-liberalism. “An ideology that equates improved human wellbeing with wealth accumulation and understands this wellbeing as best advanced through the market forces of economic efficiency, competition and consumer choice” (Churchill et al, 2011, 550).

World History. A field of study that examines history from a global perspective and looks for common patterns across cultures and societies. This type of history uses a thematic approach.

Media. The term “media” in this thesis refers to the dissemination of news and opinion pieces to the general public through broadcasting mediums such as newspapers, magazines, television, radio and the internet.

Stakeholder. A person with an interest or concern in an issue, such as education, who can be either affected by or affect the issue. For example, a student is affected by the quality of the education they are provided, whereas a politician is able to affect education through policies they implement or the funding they provide.

1.2 Ideology and Politics

1.2.1 Ideology and the Curriculum

“Ideology” is a term that refers to a set of beliefs or ideas held to be true by individuals, groups, or even a society. Educational theorist, Michael Apple (2004) has established the idea that curriculum and ideology are essentially linked. The idea that schools act as a “cultural distribution” system, furthers the notion that the teaching knowledge to students in schools through the specification of the curriculum is “an inherently political” act. Apple (2004, 54) affirmed that, “the body of school knowledge itself – what is included and excluded, what is important and what is unimportant—also often serves an ideological purpose”. In other words, the inclusion and exclusion of particular knowledge and content from

school curriculum illustrates an ideological inclination as it invests value in one kind of knowledge but not others. Yates (2012, 3), a leading Australian education researcher, stated that, “the selection of content and ‘messages’ of school is an important part of what is transmitted to students”. The ideologies that are held in Australian society and their link to what is taught in schools, can lead to conflicting views on the roles of education in Australian society. These have been seen to include the development of democratic citizens, social selection, economic development, and care of students (Marginson, 1993). A sociologist from the University of Melbourne, Marginson (1993, 16) has stated that, “there is a tendency to claim that one or another role of education should be dominant”. This tendency, and which particular role is championed, is an example of ideology at work.

The ideology of the group in power or government, compared with the rival ideologies of the groups which are not, is a contentious issue in the implementation of curriculum. The historical knowledge and skills that are included or excluded at compulsory levels of schooling, for example, is a much debated issue, usually decided in favour of the group holding power. As Apple (2004, x) stated, “the decision to define some groups’ knowledge as worthwhile to pass on to future generations while other groups’ culture and history hardly see the light of day says something extremely important about who has power in society”. That a particular group’s view of history has been preferred in the development of the *ACHistory* is one argument that has been used by critics such as Kevin Donnelly (2010a). Due to his vocal criticism of the 2008 *ACHistory* released by the Labor federal government, Donnelly’s selection to review the curriculum in 2014 was criticised as a calculated political move, deliberately

aimed at bringing about changes to the existing version of the *ACHistory* (Hurst, 2014; Reid, 2015).

In recent decades the influence behind the direction of education in Australia has been viewed as reflecting economic or neo-liberal ideologies (Ditchburn, 2012; Marginson, 1993). These ideologies view students as a product to be used to serve market growth. Ditchburn (2012, 263), a lecturer at Murdoch University, described education within a competitive global framework as “fundamentally construct[ing] its citizens to be skilled, employable workers capable of competing in, contributing to and being successful in the global economy”. Employers are a more recent stakeholder for education, but “in many countries, award restructuring, skills training standards and economic instrumentalism ideology have led many employer groups to agitate for a greater voice in the curriculum of schools” (Marsh, 2009, 213). The increasing influence of employers as a stakeholder group demonstrates an ideology that is influencing the group currently in power in Australia.

This reflection of economic or neo-liberal ideologies in Australian education is comparable to earlier movements in the United Kingdom in the development of their National Curriculum. Its existence was highlighted as one reason for the potential success of the implementation of the Australian Curriculum. Ditchburn (2012, 260) stated that one of the factors that could have indicated in Australia that the time for a national curriculum had arrived was “the fact that in England, a frequent source of educational emulation, national curriculum has been implemented for some years”. In relation to the development of the United Kingdom’s National Curriculum in 1987, it was stated that, “powerful groups

attempt to define and redefine educational goals in response to a changing socioeconomic climate which offered the potential for the development of new hegemonies and which threatened long-established ones”(Crawford, 1998, 274). This is comparable to the climate surrounding the initial discussions of the Australian Curriculum. The push for a national curriculum was started under the Howard government and his 2006 Australia Day address showed that he saw the shift away from the explicit teaching of certain aspects of Australian history as troubling (Howard, 2006).

The *ACHistory* released in 2008 under the Labor Government received criticism for focusing too heavily on one political view of Australia’s history (Howard, 2012; Berg, 2012). Its aim was seen to be producing “some degree of patriotism and identification with the nation, both for purposes of social integration, and as a further support to the national economic agenda” (Yates, 2012, 3). While much of the controversy that has arisen around the *ACHistory* has centred on the issue of teaching Australian, as opposed to British history, in fact the original shape paper for the *ACHistory*, written by Professor Stuart McIntyre from the University of Melbourne, framed the curriculum as a world history, rather than an Australian history approach (ACARA, 2012). As it was predominantly the Australian history components of the curriculum that generated the most debate, this thesis has made a point of considering the views of participants on the teaching of Australian history.

1.2.2 Politicisation in Relation to this Study

The term politicisation has in varying contexts been given multiple definitions and meanings. In terms of curriculum, education sociology researcher, Lawton (1980,

1), stated that “when the curriculum becomes controversial...it is essentially a political controversy”. Lawton further explained that, “the politics of the curriculum is concerned with the distribution and control of worthwhile and relevant educational knowledge and experience” (1980, 12). A different explanation of politicisation and politics states simply that “politics is about power” (Ely, 1978, 13).

In the context of the “politicisation” of the *ACHistory* as discussed in this research, the term is used in two ways. The first usage refers to the use of issues in curriculum and education, usually by politicians or political commentators, to score points in the political or public arena. In this context, “politicisation” refers to the usage of the curriculum and its contents to promote the government’s or other political parties’ viewpoint or ideology, to gain popular support, generally leading up to an election. The other use of the term “politicisation” in relation to the curriculum refers to the content of the curriculum itself and whether it displays a political bias rather than neutrality. However, these two meanings of “politicisation” are related, as debate over what is included in the content of the curriculum can often be used to cause controversy and gain political advantage.

Different ideologies have also been apparent in education policies in general. For instance, the release of the Karmel report in 1973 saw a focus on “social and economic equality” which resulted in the proposal of a disadvantaged schools program (Crittenden, 1975, 4-6). This ideology viewed the purpose of schooling as “an instrument of socialization and a crucial agent in promoting social and economic equality” (Crittenden, 1975, 4). The Karmel report was significant because it influenced the Commonwealth Government’s funding of schools,

recommending a funding model based on the “financial needs of schools” and promoted “notions of equality of opportunity and access to education” (Karmel, 1973, 4-5). This ideology is in contrast to neo-liberal ideology that views schooling as a means to produce workers to serve global market growth (Ditchburn, 2012; Marginson, 1993). Neo-liberal influence has grown substantially in the past few decades (Ditchburn, 2012).

In relation to the teaching of History in Australia, politicisation can be seen both in regard to content and its discussion in the public arena. The first “history wars” period between 2003 and 2006 is one such example (Clark, 2008). In History classrooms in the 1950s and 1960s lessons “undervalued Indigenous history and uncritically promoted Australia’s British heritage and benefits of Empire” (Donnelly, 2007, 20). With a change in views in society, what was labelled by Geoffrey Blainey (Macintyre, 2004) a "black armband" approach to history, that sought to address the failings in Australia’s past and to recognise Indigenous culture, became more prominent in teaching. The perceived politicisation of the curriculum therefore was not about the power struggles occurring between Australia’s political parties, but instead, was about contested ideologies influencing the interpretation of events in Australian history.

An example of a History curriculum arguably being used for political gain can be seen in former Prime Minister, John Howard’s approach. Howard’s history summit in 2006 was intended to begin the process of developing a national History curriculum. At this stage, however, there was no attempt to include the participation of the states and territories (Taylor & Collins, 2012b).

Whether the potential politicisation of the *ACHistory* in Australian schools is a concern is debatable. As Smithson (1987, 28) explained,

The claim that curriculum should be freed from ‘political interference’ and power handed over to experts who... will not sully their hands with the dirty business of politics, is untenable, for such control simply replaces the politics of the many by the politics of a single individual.

This in itself is a concerning idea, and raises the question: can a curriculum ever escape being political?

1.2.3 Public Expectation of Politicisation in Australia

Public awareness of politicisation has risen in recent years in Australia. For instance, the increasing politicisation in the state or Commonwealth public service in relation specifically to the political appointments of public service leaders, appears to have set up an expectation among the general public that the involvement of politicians and their decisions in a given area of concern are always politically motivated (Rodwell, 2009). This can be seen as one noticeable result of the increase of Commonwealth involvement in education and has potentially important outcomes for the history curriculum in the future.

Public expectations of political interference do have some basis in history in Australia. For instance, while supposedly set apart from politics, the public service has been increasingly seen to have become politicised due to the political appointment of public service leaders on contracts (Rodwell, 2009). As early as 1989 commentators had noted that “claims the Australian federal public service has become politicised have become frequent in recent years” (Weller, 1989, 369) and these claims continued (Mulgan, 1999). One prominent example occurred in 1975, when just months after the appointment under the Whitlam Government of

public servant Peter Wilenski as Secretary to the Department of Labor and Immigration, the federal opposition vowed to remove him should they take office. At the time the opposition promised to “‘discharge from the Public service’ any political appointments made by the Labor party” (The Sydney Morning Herald, 1975, 2). The main claim that the public service had become politicised was linked to “the accusation that permanent appointments are made for partisan reasons” (Weller, 1989, 374). Politicisation in terms of the public service was defined as the opposite of neutrality (Weller, 1989; Mulgan, 1999), since it involved “the use of the public service for party purposes” and “the appointment, promotion and tenure of public servants through party political influence” (Mulgan, 1999, 1). Public comments from both sides of politics over the subsequent decades have served to heighten expectations of politicisation through the recurrence of such accusations and suspicions in the media.

The expectation of politicisation in Australian society was demonstrated when the then Minister for Education, Christopher Pyne, announced the *Review of the Australian Curriculum* in early 2014. Following the announcement and the selection of Kevin Donnelly and Kenneth Wiltshire as the two reviewers, an expectation that the review was deliberately political in seeking to change the curriculum to serve the ideological position of the Coalition government was clearly visible in much of the public commentary (Ashenden, 2014). As former political advisor and academic, Ashenden (2014) stated “Christopher Pyne’s appointment of right-wing warrior Kevin Donnelly as one of two reviewers of the national curriculum was greeted with howls of outrage”. Fear and anxieties about political interference in the education of Australian children could be said to be

part of a wider expectation that the actions of politicians in Australia generally serve an ideological or power-driven motive.

The belief that appointments were “made on the basis of partisan alignment” (Weller, 1989, 369) can be seen to have transferred into the debate and perceptions surrounding the development of the *ACHistory* and its review. Claims that the *ACHistory* developed under a Labor federal government was “too left-wing” were given credence through highlighting that the author, Professor Stuart MacIntyre, was an “ex-communist” (Zarmati, 2012; Windschuttle, 2008). In the same vein, claims that the 2014 review initiated under a Coalition federal government, was biased used the political leanings of the reviewers as support for this accusation (Bennet, 2014). The commonly expressed view was that the curriculum was being used by the political parties to promote their own ideological views of the past and that the writers and reviewers of the curriculum were each appointed for their political affiliations (Reid, 2015).

Concerns raised about the politicisation of the Australian Curriculum, and fears of government interference were not entirely unfounded. Indeed, the idea that education has a role to play in preparing students to become democratic citizens means that, to an extent, “education and politics tend to be conflated” (Marginson, 1993, 19). The increase in the involvement of the Commonwealth Government in education over the years since Federation demonstrates that schools had become an area of interest for Commonwealth Governments. In this sense, concern over the potential politicisation of the Australian Curriculum could be considered a side effect of the Commonwealth’s increasingly visible influence in this area.

Originally the national *ACHistory* had been called “left-wing” (Donnelly, 2010b) and accused of promoting only one view of history. When the 2014 review was announced with the change in 2013 to a Coalition government, and particularly after the reviewers were selected, the concern was that the curriculum would be altered, to reflect a right-wing bias instead. The controversial views expressed by reviewer Kevin Donnelly about corporal punishment in schools prior to the 2014 review’s release did nothing to quell these concerns (Knott, 2014b), which were expressed through comments in the media (Ashenden, 2014). It was clear that Pyne’s announcement of the review raised apprehensions about the resumption of the “history wars”. This thesis chose to investigate how school stakeholders viewed the political influence in the *ACHistory*.

1.3 Significance of the Study

At the beginning the issue that this study sought to investigate was whether there the process that had been used to develop the curriculum was seen as politicised by school stakeholders to the same extent as the views expressed in the media and in academic peer-reviewed journals. It then further, sought to investigate whether views on the development process, including the 2014 review, had influenced the importance that these school stakeholders attributed to History in schools.

The study was significant as there had been no research that I had been able to locate into the opinions of school stakeholders, such as parents, teachers and students on the *ACHistory* and their views on the development process. This study aimed to give these school stakeholders, some of whom were rarely asked for their opinions, a chance to make their voices heard. It also sought to

investigate whether the participants' opinions on the development process, including the 2014 review, had influenced the importance these school stakeholders attributed to History in schools. Overall, this was an exploratory study that aimed to probe some of these views and provide directions for future research based on participants' views on the *ACHistory*, its development and implementation.

1.3.1 Finding a Gap

It is important to take into account the history of responsibilities for education in Australia. When examining the relationship of the states and Commonwealth in the development of curriculum policy, it is necessary to question how the Commonwealth Government has been able to exert influence over the *ACHistory*, as well as curriculum more generally, in Australian schools in the early years of the twenty-first century. A number of studies have examined the activity of the Commonwealth Government in school education from the time of Federation in 1901 to the present. The reason for such a thorough survey at the beginning of the present research is that “in order to understand curriculum reform we need to develop a sense of history” (Crawford, 1998, 263).

For this reason, the history of curriculum development is outlined alongside contemporary commentary on curriculum development in Australia over the past decade and, in particular, commentary on the *ACHistory* released under the Australian Curriculum. It has also been particularly relevant to review the academic discourse that has been released regarding the establishment of an Australian national curriculum, and more specifically the *ACHistory*, that is now

being implemented in schools. This broad scope was necessary to situate the recent changes in curriculum development in their historical context and to demonstrate how significant the recent changes have been. A review of the literature in these areas led to an analysis of the ideologies behind the curriculum documents issued, as well as to relevant past studies of stakeholder views on History. A consideration of the available literature, pointed to a gap in research so far, and the need for a study which investigated school stakeholders' views.

With all the curriculum changes occurring, students, the people with arguably the highest stake in their education have been notably absent voices in the discussion over the direction of History education. Students are important school stakeholders as they are the recipients of the curriculum and are expected to leave school with certain knowledge and skills. The lack of these can impact on their future career opportunities. The move to the *ACHistory* meant that the content and skills students were being taught in schools had changed. It was important to hear what students thought about these changes and how they affected the students personally, as well as the views of other school stakeholders. Politicisation of the curriculum was an issue that was often raised by academics and even the media, but without asking school stakeholders, such as students what they thought, it was hard to say whether this was an issue that concerned them. While other key school stakeholders, such as parents, teachers and History Teachers' Association members, had been provided with opportunities to comment on the *ACHistory*, whether they were satisfied with these opportunities, and felt they had been heard, was another issue considered in this study. If it was perceived that the curriculum was being used for political purposes, did they feel

these took precedence or did these stakeholders feel their views had been sufficiently taken into consideration?

1.3.2 Aims

This research study was conceived as an exploratory investigation of what was a new phenomenon in Australia – a school History curriculum designed for all schools, in all states and territories of the nation. It focused on gathering the thoughts and feelings about this new curriculum from three sources: a small group of teachers who were actually implementing the *ACHistory* in their classrooms in three different states; small groups of students from the classes of these teachers; and some of the parents of these students. The data from these school stakeholders were then compared with the views about the *ACHistory* evident in media and academic articles published over the period this research was taking place. The aims of this data gathering and subsequent analysis and comparison are outlined below.

1. To find out what school stakeholders regarded as the purposes of History education, as compared to the views expressed in academic and media articles published around the time of the research.
2. To investigate the issue of the politicisation of the History curriculum within Australian schools from the point of view of school stakeholders and compare their opinions with those expressed in academic and media articles published around the time of the research.
3. To find out how far the new History curriculum had influenced the content and skills taught in the classrooms of the teacher participants and whether or not, in the views of the school stakeholders, it was able to cater for the diversity of background and experience found amongst the students in these classrooms.

4. To examine how far the various school stakeholders considered that they had had any influence in shaping the formation of the new *ACHistory* (e.g. content, structure and teaching approaches).

5. To ascertain any differences in attitude toward the *ACHistory* among the school stakeholders in the three states and the way they viewed the changes introduced at the classroom level.

1.3.3 The Importance of Investigating these Issues

This study was significant as considerable changes had occurred in the area of History education at the time this research was conducted. The implementation of the *ACHistory* marked the first time a proposed national History curriculum had actually reached the stage of being introduced into all Australian schools (Brennan, 2014). It represented a move towards central curriculum development, rather than the state-based approach of the previous century. No earlier studies had considered the views of school stakeholders in the different states, particularly states like Western Australia and South Australia, that were large in area and very different in population distribution and history, as well as geographically distant from the eastern states.

The announcement of the 2014 review, while not necessarily leading to massive changes, created more uncertainty at the time about the future direction of history teaching and whether the centralised approach could be sustained. Changes, although not necessarily major, continued in this area, even after my interviews, as schools in Victoria and Western Australia moved to their state-based versions of the curriculum. The potential for these changes to influence classrooms and their teachers both positively and negatively existed. Further, the possibility that

these changes in the area of History teaching could impact on the way History was valued as a school subject is an important consideration for any future changes in this area.

The impact that the move to a national curriculum has had on the views of school stakeholders in different states towards History has not yet been examined. The study offered insights into how a national History curriculum in Australia has been received and how History is being valued as a school subject as a result. It also examined some of the differences between the states in their implementation and the reception of the curriculum in their contexts. The scholarship from this research has made a contribution to the fields of both Education and History.

1.3.4 Reference to Previous Studies

Previous studies which have examined the Australian Curriculum have tended to focus on the enactment of the curriculum in classrooms and an analysis of the curriculum document itself. Authors in this area have included Taylor (2010), Taylor, Fahey, Kriewaldt & Boon (2012), Roberts (2013) and Yates, Woelert, Millar & O'Connor (2017).

Collins, from the University of Western Sydney, has written two articles, one co-authored with Taylor who has published extensively about the Australian Curriculum, and the treatment of *ACHistory* in the media. In one article, Collins (2013, 21) concluded that,

The dynamics of public discourse and the subject of history education are perpetually linked through force of circumstance in the relationship between politics and history; primarily, this relationship exists in the enmeshment of the distinctive human behaviour of representing and

assessing the past with the distinctive human behaviour of holding and promoting preferred forms of good.

Missing from these analyses of the media reporting on the History curriculum was any reference to the views of school stakeholders and the influence these public discussions could have on the way these stakeholders viewed the curriculum.

One relevant PhD thesis from the University of Adelaide investigated the perspectives of teachers “on the ways in which the reform would influence their professional practices” (Rose, 2016). This thesis looked at all four of the Phase One subjects (Mathematics, Science, English, History). It made some recommendations for History after finding that teachers did not feel confident in this learning area. As this thesis was examining only the views of teachers it focused predominantly on the issues they faced in their professional practices rather than their views on the development process. As a result, its recommendations focused mainly on pre-service education in History and “minimum standards for teachers of History” (Rose, 2016).

Other noteworthy previous studies have looked at the history behind the development of education policy in Australia, the associated politics and other influences in the history of schooling in Australia. Previous studies that examined the role of the Commonwealth Government of Australia in the area of education and schooling were particularly relevant. Earlier examples include works by educational historians such as Tannock (1975) and Smart (1976; 1977) who both investigated the role of the Commonwealth Government in education up to the mid-70s.

More recent works have included those by Taylor, who was involved in the writing of the *ACHistory*. Taylor's (2018), book *Class Wars* examined the historical background behind the funding of schools in Australia. This work provided an overview of the political, social and religious contexts of the past and some of the motivations that led to the recent involvement of the Commonwealth Government in funding education. On the other hand, Campbell and Proctor's (2014) *History of Australian Schooling* provided an extensive history of schools in Australia from colonial times until 2014 and examined the way that the provision of schooling has influenced Australian society.

Prior to the introduction of the *ACHistory*, there were studies that were notable for their inclusion of student participants in order to seek their opinions on the history taught in classrooms. These studies, while not directly comparable in subject matter to this project, were notable for their inclusion of student participants. The most notable of these was Anna Clark's (2008) study which sought the views of senior high school students in 34 schools in states and territories across the country on the way that Australian history was taught in schools. Clark examined students' thoughts on whether History was important and what they liked and disliked about it. Many of the students Clark interviewed felt that Australian history was repetitive and boring (Clark, 2008). Clark found that

time and again in their focus groups around the country, students explained what they wanted from Australian history...They acknowledged the importance of knowing the facts about Australian history, but they also want historical narratives, discussions and debates, and imagination in the classroom. (Clark, 2008, 142)

While Clark's study preceded the development of the *ACHistory*, it provided important insights into the thoughts of these students, particularly on Australian history and how to make the learning of history more engaging in the classroom.

Her research also provided useful confirmation that the collection of student data was possible and worth the effort.

Ashton and Hamilton (2009), also included students in their survey of the opinions of ordinary Australians and History teachers about the standard of history taught in schools. In this case the inclusion of students was restricted to Year 10 students in New South Wales. The results of this survey supported the findings of Clark (2008), that students found History as a subject boring. In addition, only one third of the students surveyed felt that teachers were “trustworthy sources of information about the past” (Ashton & Hamilton, 2009, 61). While this study, like Clark’s, was carried out in the period before the introduction of the *ACHistory*, and not related to curriculum development, these two studies are relevant to the present research, due to their inclusion of student voices. The opinions of students are not evident in the rest of the literature on this topic.

1.3.5 Research Questions

As indicated in the sections above, the research questions were intended to be exploratory in nature and investigate the range of views expressed within schools, by History education specialists and in the wider community. They were worded as follows:

1. What did the school stakeholders in the three states see as the purposes of History education in Australia? How did their views compare with those expressed in media and academic articles and why?
2. How far did the school stakeholders consider they had contributed to the process of developing the *Australian Curriculum: History* and to what extent

- did they feel that it had become politicised? How different were the views expressed by academic and media writers and why?
3. How did school stakeholders evaluate the Australian history topics in the Year 9 and 10 levels of the *ACHistory* and how successful did they consider the new curriculum to be in catering for the diversity of student backgrounds and experiences in the three states investigated?
 4. What differences were evident among the stakeholders from the three states in their attitudes to the *Australian Curriculum: History*? What factors explain the modifications to the *Australian Curriculum: History* introduced by the three states during the implementation stage?

1.3.6 Research Method

Qualitative data relating to these questions were gathered from interviews with school stakeholders during 2016. These were triangulated with views expressed in published academic articles and in the media over the period when the research was taking place, 2014-2018. The collection and analysis of these data are discussed in detail in Chapter Four.

1.4 Structure of Thesis

Chapter Two of this thesis provides a survey of the literature regarding the value and purpose of History teaching and current trends in History teaching, both internationally and in Australia. In Chapter Three the history of responsibilities between state and Commonwealth governments in relation to education are considered, as well as the processes, issues and controversies around the introduction of a national History curriculum in Australia. Chapter Four then discusses the qualitative methodology in data collection and analysis, as well as

the operational details of how these were carried out. The data collected in this study were then analysed in terms of themes that emerged from studying the transcripts of the participant interviews and focus group discussions. Chapter Five looks at participants' views on the value and purpose of including History in the school curriculum. Chapter Six examines participants' responses to the process behind the development of the *ACHistory*. Chapter Seven analyses participants' thoughts on the inclusion and treatment of Australian history in the Australian Curriculum, while their views on the involvement of the Commonwealth Government in History education are the focus of analysis in Chapter Eight. Finally, Chapter Nine provides a summary of the findings, provides answers to the research questions and suggests possible areas of future research.

CHAPTER TWO

PURPOSES OF HISTORY IN SCHOOLS AND TRENDS IN HISTORY EDUCATION

2.1 Introduction: The Value and Purpose of History in Schools

In July 2019, the History Councils of New South Wales, South Australia, Victoria and Western Australia adopted a statement on The Value of History. This statement explained that:

History shapes our **identities**, engages us as **citizens**, creates inclusive **communities**, is part of our **economic** well-being, teaches us to **think critically** and creatively, inspires **leaders** and is the foundation of our **future generations**. [Bold text in original] (History Councils of NSW, SA, WA & Victoria, 2019)

The definitions of the words in bold were then explained. Taken as a whole, this represented a strong statement about why history, in general, was valuable for the Australian community. This chapter looks at the past inclusion of History as a subject in Australian schools, the reasons for its study, before finally examining some of the changes in the ways History has been taught since the 1880s.

2.2 History as a School Subject in Australia

Until recently the curriculum delivered in schools in each Australian state or territory has been determined by the state or territory government concerned. Since the 1960s, however, the states have not had sole control of education, or of History education more specifically, (discussed further in Chapter Three) due to the influence of Commonwealth Government funding. Even prior to the Australian Curriculum, there were moves to ensure some form of consistency in school organisation and curriculum between states through regular Australian Education Council (AEC) meetings of state education authorities and the federal minister, from 1993 this became the current Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) (Clark, 2009). Nevertheless, each state maintained its own curriculum document related to the subjects taught in its schools. In South Australia, for example, the curriculum document at the beginning of the twenty-first century was known as the South Australian Curriculum Standards and Accountability Framework (SACSA) (Department of Education and Children's Services, 2001). Western Australia had a curriculum document called Curriculum Framework (Andrich, 2009), while Victoria used Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VCAA, 2005).

The teaching of History in schools had an accepted place in the syllabus of each Australian state from the time of the establishment of schools. It was included in the curriculum for boys attending grammar schools at the secondary level in each state during the 1880s and, depending on the school, it was occasionally an area of study for girls (Barcan, 1980). New school readers were developed with the "idea that Australian children should read something of their own geography, history

and literature” (Campbell & Proctor, 2014, 100) quickly gaining popularity. The historical events depicted in these readers were generally centred around “the world’s northern temperate zone as the workshop of the world and the source of high civilisation” (Campbell & Proctor, 2014, 100).

In a less well-established tradition, History has been taught as part of other courses, such as Studies of Society and Environment (SOSE), for a long time, too. According to education historian Barcan (1980), this first emerged as a school subject called Social Studies, during widespread curriculum changes that occurred across Australia from 1938 to 1947. As a subject which merged History into one subject with Economics and Geography, Social Studies was first introduced in Victoria in 1938, initially in a technical school, before spreading to other schools (Barcan, 1980). It followed a similar path in other states, beginning first in technical schools (Barcan, 1980). In some states, such as New South Wales, South Australia and Tasmania, the introduction of Social Studies

was the result of the increased proportion of less academic pupils following the raising of the minimum leaving age..., the easier transition from primary school to secondary schools, and concern over social education... It was highly regarded by progressives and implied not merely a new approach to subject-matter but a new approach to the pupil and to teaching methods. (Barcan, 1980, 281)

The view that subject involving an amalgamation of different disciplines were not as challenging as the discrete subject of History seems to have remained; it was one of the criticisms directed towards SOSE before it was replaced by History under the Australian Curriculum (Maude, 2014).

2.2.1 Studies of Society and Environment

With the introduction and implementation of the Australian Curriculum, a change occurred in many states around the way History was taught to students in the primary and middle years. Prior to the implementation of the Australian Curriculum, History in many states in Australia had been taught at primary and lower secondary levels as part of a Studies of Society and Environment (SOSE) subject, although the name of the subject varied slightly between states. SOSE was a wide-ranging subject that encompassed subjects such as Civics and Citizenship, Geography and Economics, as well as History. The introduction of SOSE in many states had the eventual result that History in Years 8-10 was no longer a discrete subject and instead History topics and skills were forced to compete for class time with the other subject areas within SOSE (Marsh & Hart, 2011).

The movement to change from History and other discipline areas to SOSE began to truly emerge from 1967 with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) conference in Melbourne, which discussed the teaching of social sciences (Marsh & Hart, 2011). Meetings on this topic did not cease at the completion of this conference, and Commonwealth Minister for Education, John Dawkins, furthered the move towards SOSE in 1988 with his calls for a national curriculum (Marsh & Hart, 2011). Through this push for a national curriculum, eight learning areas were created by the Australian Education Council's Curriculum and Assessment Committee (Marsh & Hart, 2011). One of these areas was SOSE.

Debates surrounding the development of SOSE focused on whether the strands covered should represent traditional disciplines such as History, or whether they should represent conceptual themes such as “time” and “place” (Hannan, 1992; Marsh & Hart, 2011). The discipline approach was thought by its critics to enable “subject empires to stick to their old ways” (Hannan, 1992, 29). Rather than focusing on content, SOSE was “an attempt at integrated curriculum” (Marsh & Hart, 2011, 14-15) which focused on skills and concepts.

Several problems were identified with the teaching of SOSE as a subject. SOSE, due to the amalgamation of subject areas had a large scope, which challenged teachers’ personal knowledge and required them to teach a large range of information and subject methodologies. The pre-service training was also an issue with primary teachers often having little or no training in the area. This problem continued into the lower secondary years, with SOSE often being taught by teachers with little, if any, training (Taylor, Fahey, Kriewaldt & Boon, 2012). Further, due to the large range of topics covered under SOSE, some students were taught by teachers who were not specialists in the area of History, despite being specialists in another subject area covered by SOSE. While SOSE was adopted under varying titles in most states and territories in Australia prior to the Australian Curriculum, some states, such as New South Wales, chose to continue teaching History as a stand-alone or discrete subject (Marsh & Hart, 2011). In Victoria, concern over declining numbers of students studying History in the senior years led to a reintroduction of History as a discrete subject before the introduction of the Australian Curriculum (Marsh & Hart, 2011).

2.3 The Purposes of History Education

There are a number of purposes for teaching History in Australian schools. One purpose of History education (that is discussed later in this section) is related to the need to prepare students for careers after school, but others include preparing students to participate in a democratic society, or to address inequality in Australian society (Ditchburn, 2012; Gerrard, Savage, & O'Connor, 2017). While the purposes behind education as a whole are also linked to the purposes for teaching History in schools, and in some cases share the same ideological backgrounds and proposed outcomes, the focus of this section is on the purpose of History education specifically.

Regardless of political persuasion, “recent decades have seen a strong focus in the schooling literature on curriculum as a shaper of the person, with identity, citizenship and vocational dimensions to what students learn” (Yates & Collins, 2010, 90). This view seems to be particularly relevant when discussing the purpose of History education. Another view holds that

History is important because it provides a powerful way to find out who and where we are in human experience and in human affairs. History involves people, space, and time, and as human beings we are curious about where we have come from, where we are currently, and where we are going. (Drake & Nelson, 2005, 15)

This section examines some of the perspectives on *why* History is an important part of schooling and its perceived purpose.

2.3.1 National Unity and Identification

Barton and Levstik (2004) identified many reasons or purposes of History education within the context of the USA. Barton and Levstik primarily focused on History teaching in the USA, these underlying purposes were also relevant to the case of Australia. As they write, “by learning stories about how the nation began and how it got to be where it is today, students are expected to associate themselves with the country as a whole” (Barton & Levstik, 2004, 50). Identification comes not just from learning about the past, but also how we learn about the past through teaching methods. One purpose of history education was to encourage a sense of “national identification” amongst students. This was identified as one motivation of the Australian Curriculum (Yates, 2012), as school History was often linked to promoting a national identity.

History is about identity formation. Through the study of history, we identify national perspectives and understand what it means to be human and where we are as people in space and time. History helps us identify what we share with other human beings and how we are distinct from everyone else. It helps us understand our rights as persons and it helps us to react together in matters concerning the public good. (Drake & Nelson, 2015, 16)

It has been suggested that the encouragement of national identification helps to promote both social integration and national unity (Yates, 2012). Australia is a multicultural nation, and as a result “history as a school subject has a powerful role in supporting social cohesion in multicultural democratic societies and in combating commercially motivated fables, nowhere more so than in Australia” (Taylor, Fahey, Kriewaldt & Boon, 2012, 50). As Australia has immigrants from

many different backgrounds and former national affiliations, this is an important reason for including History in the school curriculum. The push for the inclusion of more Australian history, in particular, suggests national identification and unity has been a key motivation behind History education under the Australian Curriculum. As Taylor et al explain,

History as a school subject also continues to play an instrumental role in developing ideas of a national identity in democratic, as well as non-democratic, states. This seems particularly true of the nationalist side of democratic politics, where history is seen as playing an essential and highly controversial role in appreciating the importance of national progress made under any given political system. (Taylor, Fahey, Kriewaldt & Boon, 2012, 48).

However, as this quotation makes clear, this approach to History, with its focus on national progress is controversial.

Teaching history for national identification has also been linked to a “memorial stance” which uses History lessons to commemorate the past and in remembrance of past atrocities such as the Holocaust, or in the case of Australia, Gallipoli.

At a functional level, history is about avoiding social amnesia...How can we make a considered and informed decision about future actions if we have no idea about what went on before? This does not necessarily mean that decisions about the present and the future that are based on examination of the past will be foolproof, since interpretations of the past vary... (Taylor, Fahey, Kriewaldt & Boon, 2012, 45)

Through the study of these past events students are able to learn why they are commemorated and how these events have shaped the nation, as well as potentially feeling a sense of identification with the nation's history.

History education can also be used to help shape a national story. This is done through the stories of the past that students learn. This approach would focus more on the content that students learn as opposed to the skills that they develop through History education. A focus on the content to form a particular view of Australia's past and the way students respond to it can be seen as one preoccupation of many of the debates that have raged around not just history education in Australia, but Australian history in general. This can be linked to national identification where History education seeks to encourage students to identify with one particular national story.

2.3.2 Developing Informed Citizens

Another key rationale for teaching history in schools is the need to prepare students to participate in Australia's democratic system, by helping them to become informed voters and citizens. This purpose was supported by the findings of Yates, Woelert, Millar and O'Connor (2017, 98) who found that many history teachers who participated in their study hoped to develop "critically-informed and critically-literate citizens, able to participate in informed debate". The rationale for the *ACHistory* supports this purpose and states that historical 'knowledge and understanding is essential for informed and active participation in Australia's diverse society' (Australian Curriculum, 2015a). Developing informed citizens is also the rationale for the inclusion in the Australian Curriculum of another Humanities and Social Sciences (HaSS) subject, called Civics and Citizenship.

However, History can go further by helping to shape students into informed citizens through encouraging students to “deliberate” or reason their own way through political issues presented to them (Barton & Levstik, 2004, 33-4). By promoting “reasoned judgement” that requires “reflection on the causes of historical events and processes, their relative significance, the potential outcomes of alternative courses of actions [and] the impact of the past on the present...” (Barton & Levstik, 2004, 36) History encourages students to develop the skills to become informed citizens when they come to vote.

2.3.3 Future Employment and Transferable Skills

The purpose for teaching History (and other subjects too) in schools can also be seen in the skills that students develop through the subject. Students develop analytical skills, writing skills, the ability to question sources and evidence, interpret information and defend their interpretations.

History is a field of study that contributes to good vocational outcomes, because it develops skills required by employers that continue to be in short supply, including a combination of imagination and reasoning that uses and leads to creativity, effective oral communication and problem solving. (Taylor, Fahey, Kriewaldt & Boon, 2012, 47-48).

The skills that students develop through the study of History have the potential to be highly valuable for students. As the curriculum puts it:

The process of historical inquiry develops transferrable skills, such as the ability to ask relevant questions; critically analyse and interpret sources; consider context; respect and explain different perspectives; develop and

substantiate interpretations, and communicate effectively. (Australian Curriculum, 2015a)

History requires students to interpret evidence and make sense of factual data (Melluish, 2007). These are certainly skills that can be applied to other areas, both at school and in later careers.

2.3.4 Encouraging Historical Empathy

Another reason for the study of History in schools is the potential for students to develop historical empathy. Historical empathy encourages students to identify that the perspectives of the people they study are different from their own and how these different perspectives influenced the actions of people in the past (Barton & Levstik, 2004). Historical inquiry is considered to help students develop the ability to “respect and explain different perspectives” (Australian Curriculum, 2015a). The value of developing historical empathy is that it allows students to gain an understanding and appreciation for different perspectives and that it is possible for them to apply to the present.

2.3.5 Living in a Globalising World

The rationale for the History component of the Australian Curriculum states that the curriculum takes a world history approach “in order to equip students for the world (local, regional and global) in which they live” (Australian Curriculum, 2015a). The rationale goes on to explain that “an understanding of the world enhances students’ appreciation of Australian history” (Australian Curriculum, 2015a).

The Australian Curriculum, when released, included several cross-curriculum priorities that were expected to be considered in through the content of all subject areas. These were Sustainability, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures, and Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia. Australia's engagement with Asia as a cross-curriculum topic in the Australian Curriculum demonstrates a particular world view that is being incorporated, and highlights the Commonwealth Government's priority to ensure students leave school with "the skills to communicate and engage with the peoples of Asia so they can effectively live, work and learn in the region" (Australian Curriculum, 2015a). This particular cross-curriculum priority highlights the positioning of Australia in relation to globalisation. It takes into account that a large amount of trade occurs with Asia, that a number of Australia's defence agreements are with Asia, and more importantly, are indicative of a "global shift towards Asia" (Milner, 2011, 25).

ACARA has tried in the *ACHistory* to place Australian history in the context of world history. The shaping document states, "to equip students to operate in the world in which they will live, they need to understand world history. History should have a broad and comprehensive foundation from which its implications for Australia can be grasped" (National Curriculum Board, 2009a, 12). It also takes into account the fact that the world is continuing to become globalised with connections between other countries in the world strengthening (Education Today, 2010). It allows students to have a broader overall view of past events and views, and to gain a greater opportunity to look in detail at opposing views and bias by potentially allowing them to look not just at Australia's role, but also at other countries' too. This focus on world history in the senior years of the *ACHistory*

demonstrates a shifting focus toward Australia's position as a nation in the world, with a particular emphasis on the Asian region.

Globalisation has played a large role in the changes felt by society. Australia is faced with competitors economically in agriculture and industry, and this competition has reached into education, with OECD results used to compare Australian students with their international peers. With the decline in Australia's manufacturing industries, the nation's role in the world is changing. There has been rise in the level of Commonwealth involvement in education with the introduction of NAPLAN, the MySchool website, and the Australian Curriculum.

2.4 Trends in History Teaching Internationally and in Australia

This section looks at the introduction and increasing popularity of some of the theories and pedagogies used in History teaching and how these new pedagogies caused another source of tension surrounding the *ACHistory*, due to the belief among some teachers that the new curriculum favoured a particular teaching style (Kiem, 2012).

The section first discusses the theory of learning transmission as it relates to History, before moving on to examine more recent constructivism and student-centred pedagogies. Finally, it considers the tension between the two learning theories (transmission and constructivism) and the influence this has had on the debate surrounding the *ACHistory*. The section concludes by looking at the use of narrative history as opposed to themes in History teaching and the inclusion of new perspectives in History.

2.4.1 Transmission Approaches to History Teaching

Transmission is a theory of teaching that holds that the teacher's role in the classroom is to provide direct instruction to students (Christensen & Aldridge, 2013). Transmission teaching is what is commonly considered the traditional way of teaching (Christensen & Aldridge, 2013).

The teacher dispenses knowledge, and the students are expected to be willing recipients. Often, transmission involves scripted lessons, and teachers' manuals provide the words a teacher is to say. The teacher is expected to read the words verbatim and not stray from the script. (Christensen & Aldridge, 2013, 71)

While the teacher is responsible for directly instructing students, in this style of classroom students are seen as "passive recipients of knowledge" and "Because transmission is often used to teach specific facts, there is often one correct answer to a question the teacher would ask." (Christensen & Aldridge, 2013, 72). This is in contrast to a constructivist approach, discussed later in this section.

School History is one area where this approach has been particularly prevalent.

Another characteristic of 'traditional' school history was that it was essentially a 'received' subject, in the sense that pupils were given a story or stories that were to be considered as factually correct, and not subject to controversies of interpretation. (Haydn, 2012, 277).

History teaching in the 1960s in Australia "relied heavily on teacher-centred transmission and rote learning" (Burley, 2012, 54). Generally, the idea that more than one national story could be told was "not a feature of school history" until at least the senior years of schooling (Haydn, 2012, 277).

The popularity of transmission teaching, particularly in History, has multiple causes. Firstly, transmission teaching is popular for being easy to measure and easy for new teachers to follow. Further, its popularity is also due to its efficiency “in teaching social and conventional knowledge... This includes facts, such as the fact that ‘Quebec is a French Canadian province.’ Children cannot be expected to invent this knowledge.” (Christensen & Aldridge, 2013,73).

Learning of facts is one key reason for transmission’s popularity. As such, rote learning is another feature in traditional classrooms (Kiem, 2012). It is particularly popular with those who wish to promote Whig view of history in classrooms that celebrates the achievements of the nation. In the UK,

For most of the time that history has been part of the school curriculum, the rationale for its inclusion has been based predominantly on the idea that the transmission of a positive story about the national past will inculcate in young people a sense of loyalty to the state, a reassuring and positive sense of identity and belonging. (Haydn, 2012, 277).

2.4.2 Constructivist Approaches to History Teaching

Constructivism is a learning theory that holds that students actively develop new knowledge and understanding through the “interaction between what they already know and believe and knowledge with which they come into contact” (Richardson, 2003, 1624). This constructivist view sees students as “active agent[s] in the process of knowledge acquisition” (Olusegun, 2015, 66). The active, rather than passive, role that students take in their learning is a key element of constructivism. This theory gained popularity in Australia and was supported in schools by state government policies. For instance, in South Australia in 1999 the

“Learning to Learn Project” was supported by government funding. This project encouraged teachers “to contribute to curriculum policy” by developing a pedagogical approach that supported creativity (Peters, Le Cornu & Collins, 2003, 2). The project “[drew] on and promotes ‘constructivism’ as a theory appropriate to rethinking learning processes and towards achieving improved meta-learning” (Peters, Le Cornu & Collins, 2003, 2). Further, under the South Australian Curriculum Standards and Accountability (SACSA) Framework “the importance of constructivism as a theoretical basis for educational improvement in government schools” was emphasised (Peters, Le Cornu & Collins, 2003, 2).

Constructivism, as stated, is a learning theory. It is “not a specific pedagogy” (Olusegun, 2015, 66) and so can take different forms. One approach would be inquiry-based learning, where students are provided with inquiry questions that are used to guide their learning. The *ACHistory*, for instance, provides inquiry questions for each year level to provide a framework for students learning (ACARA, n.d.).

However, because “constructivism is a theory of learning and not a theory of teaching” this leads to one of its main criticisms, that “the elements of effective constructivist teaching are not known” (Richardson, 2003, 1629). This has led to some concerns over how effective constructivist approaches are in each classroom setting, and was apparent in some of the calls for a return to a more traditional approach to teaching History in Australia (Donnelly, 2011b).

While History teaching in Australia has moved to favour a constructivist approach that encourages students to pursue inquiry-based learning, Kiem (2012), former

president of the History Teachers' Association of Australia (HTAA), suggested that a balance was needed between the constructivist inquiry-based learning and the more transmission based narrative history. Kiem wrote that

there is the danger in Australia that we suffer from limited input and a lack of diversity when it comes to views about history pedagogy. It is a situation where current orthodoxies too easily go unexamined. The advent of a national curriculum would have been the perfect opportunity for a wide-ranging discussion about pedagogy. (Kiem, 2012, 67)

The next section will discuss the use of narrative and thematic history and how these have shaped History teaching.

2.4.3 Narrative History versus Thematic History or a Balance?

Narrative history presents history in a story-based or narrative form. It tends to focus on chronological events and the actions of key individuals. In contrast, thematic history (as the name suggests) instead focuses on key themes, such as migration or women. The *ACHistory* takes a thematic approach. The *Shape of the Australian Curriculum: History* (National Curriculum Board, 2009) listed a range of proposed themes for each depth study. For example, under Unit 4: Australia in the Modern World (1901–present), the proposed themes were:

- global conflict and collective peace
- migration and nation building
- mass communication and popular culture
- dictatorship and democracy
- rights and freedoms
- decolonisation and globalisation
- active citizenship. (National Curriculum Board, 2009, 11)

The *ACHistory* also provides inquiry questions for Years 7-10 (ACARA, n.d.). The thematic approach often makes use of inquiry-based learning which encourages students to work with questions to analyse historical sources and develop their skills, and through this, demonstrate historical understanding (Kiem, 2012). One risk, however, with inquiry-based learning, and with thematic history, is “that the relentless pursuit of inquiry may become much more tedious than the old narrative approach is alleged to have been” (Kiem, 2012, 67).

One criticism that did emerge about the *ACHistory* was its lack of an overarching narrative. While the curriculum does progress, for the most part, chronologically through world history, this criticism holds that the depth studies focus too heavily on specific themes (Department of Education, 2014a) and neglected to form a narrative to catch students’ interest.

While at the extreme, a narrative approach could be seen as a return of “school history to the delivery of a single narrative to be rote-learned and assessed on recall of facts alone” (Burley, 2012, 57), Kiem made the argument that narrative history does not deserve the bad name it was sometimes given. His own experience as a student, at a time when narrative history was common, left him excited by to learn about history. As he suggests, “the very large numbers from that era [1960s and 1970s] who were attracted to history teaching must have had at least a reasonable experience while at school” (Kiem, 2012, 66). However, he also noted that

The conclusion should not be that we must deliver simple narratives and exclude all reference to methodology, the constructed nature of narratives about the past or the complexities that this gives rise to. Particularly as

students get older, these very complexities should be inherent in any study of the discipline. (Kiem, 2012, 68)

This conclusion that the inclusion of skills, such as those developed through inquiry, was useful in the teaching of History was also shared by UK academic, Hayden, who stated that,

The move towards presenting pupils with an established or defined narrative of the past, and increasing the amount of subject content and factual knowledge which needs to be covered in the history curriculum [in the UK] also risks reversing the gains which have been made in developing pupils' understanding of history as a form of knowledge, with its rules, procedures and conventions for ascertaining the validity of claims; a useful skill in a society that has become increasingly sophisticated in terms of manipulating and distorting information. (Haydn, 2012, 283)

As stated previously, a balance between the two approaches is needed.

2.4.4 The Inclusion of New Perspectives and Different Narratives

Australia is a multicultural nation with people from many different religions and backgrounds. Students in classrooms in Australia come from families with very different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. One focus that came across in media articles about the Australian Curriculum before the 2014 review was the need for Judeo-Christian values and a focus on the achievements of Western civilisation (Donnelly, 2011a, Hurst, 2014). These views often appeared to be representing statements from politicians such as Christopher Pyne, who raised these two points himself in press releases. This focus, however, overlooks the contributions to Australia's history, as well as cultures and values, that have been

made by the families of many Australian students and their families from a non-English speaking and European background. This focus favoured only one interpretation of history over the multitude of others. As such, it is important to consider whether a strong focus on Western civilisation holds relevance to all students in today's Australian classrooms. For instance, when students study the World Wars it is pertinent to understand that in Australian classrooms there are many students whose families may have fought for opposing countries. In these instances, it may be challenging for teachers to both engage and help these students feel connected to the content outlined under the *ACHistory*. For this reason, the inclusion of different perspectives as well as diversity in History education is important to consider.

Diversity in History education in this context is defined as the inclusion of different perspectives and interpretations on historical events, figures and values. This is a very narrow interpretation of this diversity in History education, but it would otherwise be too large a topic. One key scholar in the area of diversity in education in Australia was Dr J.J Smolicz. His research focused on cultural understanding and in particular, on cultural and linguistic pluralism in Australia. Smolicz's research on the learning experiences of immigrants in South Australian schools was ground-breaking at the time. At a History Teachers' Association of Australia's (HTAA) national conference in 1981, Smolicz addressed the topic of cultural diversity in Australian schools. After explaining the theory of multiculturalism in education that he had developed from his research findings, he outlined the changing focus in school curriculum from the classical stage based on English schooling to an international emphasis in the 1960s and the emergence of a new multicultural stage in the late 1970s. He then reviewed the History courses

available at senior secondary level over the previous twenty years in South Australia, demonstrating the way a number of subjects with an international focus had been introduced at Years 11 and 12, while the need for History teaching in Australia to have a multicultural dimension had been largely ignored.

The speakers at this HTAA conference included Eric Richards, Professor of History at Flinders University, who spoke of the value of recognising the contribution that immigration has made to the history of Australia and outlined the particular contribution made by those of Irish and Scottish background to the social and political development of Australia. Other speakers dealt with the history of German, Italian, Jewish and Lebanese peoples in South Australia, in particular. This conference demonstrated an awareness of the importance of diversity and multiculturalism in History education that emerged during the 1980s.

The inclusion of different perspectives and diversity in History teaching continued to increase since the time of Smolicz's research. This move to include different perspectives in history continued with the support of academics both in Australia and overseas. Research from academics based in North America, such as Linda Levstik, Keith Barton, Sam Wineburg and Peter Seixas, has continued to support the view that there should be a range of perspectives on history presented in schools (Levstik & Barton, 2004; Seixas, 2000, Wineburg, 1998). Wineburg, in his support of multiple perspectives, for instance, stated that

The admission of multiple perspectives—the understanding that history looks different from different vantage points—may be thought of as the cornerstone of historical thinking, a pre-requisite in the development of a

disciplined way of thinking about the past. It is what separates history from mere storytelling. (Wineburg, 1998, 232-3)

The capacity to recite facts, without the ability to comprehend that humans use “judgement and interpretation to understand who they are” turns History into “religious or nationalistic catechism” (Wineburg, 1998, 234). However, the inclusion of multiple perspectives and the development of historical thinking can be seen as a threat to state control over knowledge (Wineburg, 1998).

Instead of arguing over the “best story of the past” and weighing the merit of different versions of history (Sexias, 2000, 22), Sexias encouraged the inclusion of multiple perspectives, particularly those of minorities. He acknowledged that one problem with this approach of including multiple perspectives on historical events lies in the purpose behind the teaching of history. He addressed the question “If one wants school history to promote Canadian national unity, for example, then what purpose is served by placing before students conflicting interpretive possibilities?” (Sexias, 2000, 25). In answering this question, he explained that, in his view, the “best” version of history provides students with group identity, social cohesion and social purpose through

offering a trajectory that ties individuals’ decisions and actions in the present to the long course of events, whether expressed in the struggle for human rights, sacrifice for the national good, moral uplift or economic well-being through hard work, class struggle, or gender equality (Sexias, 2000, 23).

Likewise, Levstik and Barton have argued for the inclusion of multiple perspectives in history teaching. While it may appear that some “figures have little historical significance”, their inclusion in a History curriculum serves a

different purpose other than understanding historical events, their causes and consequences. The inclusion of some individuals

isn't meant to help students understand such things, for students aren't expected to engage in analysis when learning about them. What students are expected to do is identify with them... so they can see the United States [or Australia] as a multicultural society in which everyone can contribute to the nation's progress. (Levstik & Barton, 2004, 10)

So, while an emphasis on certain figures may not appear to be supporting an overarching national narrative, it can serve the purpose of enabling students to connect with historical figures and helping them to develop a sense of national identity.

2.5 Is there a Crisis in History Teaching in Australia?

One precursor to moves to reform education is often the idea that schools or teaching approaches are in "crisis" (Peterson, 2016; Gerrard, Savage, & O'Connor, 2017). The makeup of the crisis facing schools, however, varies. Before the 2014 review, the crisis facing Australian schools, according to some, was a lack of recognition of the impact of Western civilisation (Roskam, 2011a). Other common crises that have recurred over the last decade include the quality of teachers and the inequalities of the schooling systems (Gerrard, Savage, & O'Connor, 2017). These fears of educational crises are, of course, not limited to just History teaching. In the media, different aspects of education and schooling in general, rather than History, are periodically bemoaned as in crisis. Student-centred approaches to learning, sometimes too much, and at other times, not enough; or Information Technology all accused, at times, of lowering standards (Symons, 2012; Bagshaw, 2015; Hurst, 2013). The quality of graduate teachers leaving universities has also been called into question (Symons, 2012). These

crises, or the points of concern that politicians and the media focus on, in general, reflect the varying views that encompass the purpose(s) of schooling. At times, these crises, such as the demands for the removal of Safer Schools, have developed into moral panics (Rodwell, 2017b; Bessant, 2011).

In 2006 when John Howard called for a ‘root and branch renewal’ of history teaching, the message seemed to be that the school subject of History, in particular, was in crisis (Peterson, 2016). This speech followed the Cronulla riots which saw racial violence break out in Sydney (Rodwell, 2017; Taylor, 2018). The belief that History was in crisis, was also linked to the subject’s lack of popularity as a Year 12 subject, and the sense that History teaching in most states lacked any sense of narrative development because of its being leftist thematic orientation (Howard, 2006; Bessant, 2011, 638). The supposed belief that History education was failing stemmed from “the inability of most young people to identify key historical dates and figures”. Such lack of knowledge was interpreted “as signs of a decline in educational standards” (Bessant, 2011, 631). Further, it was claimed that “What is on offer in most classrooms is fast-food history” (Bantick, 2011), which pandered to students’ immediate interests, but left them with no understanding of what History was really about.

It can be argued that some of the sense of crisis was related to the frustration of many History teachers at not being able to teach History as a discrete subject in Years 7-10. Another feature of the crisis related to the different ideological interpretations of Australian history, and the sense of outrage and even conflict that was aroused when leading politicians supported one ideological view of

Australian history over another. A third source of division and unrest was in relation to teaching approaches.

2.5 Summary

This chapter has examined the value and purposes of teaching History in schools, both for students and for society. These purposes included promoting national unity and identification, developing students into informed citizens, and developing transferable skills and opening up future employment opportunities.

It also provided a brief outline of the teaching of History in Australia, as well as examining some of the recent approaches to the teaching and learning of History both in Australia and internationally. One key trend was the move from transmission to constructivism teaching approaches to History education through the introduction of historical inquiry methods. This included the move from narrative history to thematic history, as well as the inclusion of different perspectives in History, such as those of women and minorities, in understanding historical changes and events. It was evident from this review of teaching approaches, that some of the controversy around History education relates to competing views on the best way of teaching History in schools.

CHAPTER THREE

THE INTRODUCTION OF THE NATIONAL *AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM: HISTORY*

3.1 Introduction

This chapter is a review of the literature associated with the history of the political and educational context of schooling and curriculum in Australia. It considers the processes, issues and controversies around the introduction of a national curriculum for History teaching from Foundation to Year 10. The chapter begins by providing an overview of the state and Commonwealth responsibilities for schooling in Australia beginning before Federation until 2007. From here, it then discusses the development process behind the *Australian Curriculum: History (ACHistory)* and the reception that the new national *ACHistory* received in public debate. Finally, the chapter examines some of the controversies surrounding the introduction of a national agenda.

3.2 State-Federal Responsibilities for Schooling up to 2008

3.2.1 Introduction

In this investigation the introduction of the (national) *ACHistory*, the Commonwealth Government emerged as the major stakeholder in Australian schooling. At the time of Federation in 1901, however, the Commonwealth Government had no involvement in the organisation, the curriculum or the

funding of schools. These were all the responsibilities of the states. Changes to the income tax laws in 1942 meant the states had to depend on grants from tax money, now collected by the Commonwealth, to fund their schools. Over recent years the Commonwealth Government has been investing a considerable amount of taxpayers' money in schools to the point where it has become the key source of funding for the nation's schools. In May 2014 (Pyne, 2014), for example, the Government of Prime Minister Tony Abbott committed to investing \$64.5 billion in both government and non-government schools in all of the Australian states and territories. In 2015 the Commonwealth Government contributed \$47.2 billion to education in Australia with further funding coming from the state governments (Rice, Edwards & MacMillan, 2019). Moreover, in 2008 the Commonwealth, with the consent of the states, became the dominant partner in the introduction of a single national curriculum for all Australian schools.

3.2.2 Pre-Federation to the Second World War

Each of the states had already set up its own system of public schools prior to Federation in 1901 (Marginson, 1993). This included South Australia, Western Australia and Victoria, the three States this thesis is focused on. Each colony (as the states were then known) had its own parliament, which in turn managed its own Department of Education and funding for schooling. For the most part, public education at this point in time meant provisions for primary education, but some moves had been made to establish secondary education in some colonies.

In South Australia, and in other colonies, schools were initially established privately or by churches, such as the Lutheran church (Whitehead, 2014; Campbell & Proctor, 2014). The South Australian government began exerting

influence over schools in the mid-nineteenth century through subsidising the already established schools in the colony, before introducing legislation for compulsory schooling in the primary years and establishing a public school system by the end of the period (Whitehead, 2014). A key difference in South Australia to other colonies was the decision to only fund non-denominational schools from 1851 (Whitehead, 2014). Under the 1851 Education Act the South Australian colonial government provided support for local community schools whose “head teachers would be licensed if they had at least twenty students and provided efficient secular, not religious, instruction” (Whitehead, 2014, 116).

A second key difference was that “the South Australian 1875 Education Act provided for compulsory but not free attendance” (Whitehead, 2014, 112). This was in contrast to colonies such as Victoria which introduced legislation that made provisions for compulsory schooling to be free (Horne & Sherington, n.d.; Whitehead, 2014). As a result, low-fee private schools continued to operate in South Australia, after they had disappeared in Victoria, right up until the introduction of free public schooling in 1891 (Whitehead, 2014).

In Victoria, as in South Australia, the first schools established were privately operated or run by religious groups. The Gold rush in 1851 led to both population and economic growth in Victoria (Banerjee & Wilson, 2016). At this time, during the mid-1800s most schools were affiliated with a church and “At the 1861 census ‘denominational’ schools probably enrolled more than half the students attending school in Victoria” (Horne & Sherington, n.d., 370). Prior to the introduction of publicly funded secondary schools, state or public schools in Victoria were

restricted to primary schools. A small number of scholarships were offered to students leaving state primary schools to continue their secondary education at private schools (Horne & Sherington, n.d.). However, support for publicly funded schools grew in Victoria and an Act of Parliament in 1872 provided for state funded schools. These schools were both compulsory and secular. “The Victorian Act of 1872 effectively endorsed ‘non-sectarian’ instruction, excluding denominational education” (Horne & Sherington, n.d.,381).

Western Australia followed a similar path to the other colonies, with the first schools set up without state funding. The Elementary Education Act of 1871 established a Central Board of education located in Perth and contained a provision for compulsory primary education for children in Western Australia (Godfrey, 2007). Funding for secondary schools was introduced in 1875 when state funding was provided for Perth High School. While this school was socially exclusive, the endowment of funds helped to “legitimise secular secondary school foundations” (Sherrington & Campbell, 2006, 19). This led to an eventual expansion of secular schooling post primary school in Western Australia. An Education Department, led by a Minister of Parliament, was established in the Western Australian colony in 1893 immediately following the granting of self-government (Godfrey, 2007). Western Australia was one of the last states, in 1895, to enact a “free, compulsory, secular” Act “that provided the foundation for state-provided schools under a centralised bureaucracy accountable to the oversight of a minister of the crown” (Horne & Sherington, n.d., 381).

Due to these existing state initiatives which established education systems in each of the colonies, education was not seen initially as an area that required the Commonwealth Government's involvement. There was no attempt to include education with the other powers handed over to the Commonwealth Government under the Australian Constitution (Tannock, 1975). As McCulloch (1975, 1) explained,

Education receives no specific mention in the Australian Constitution of 1901 or in any subsequent amendments. It is therefore, according to one view, one of the unnamed residual powers resting with the States, in terms of the agreements reached at the Constitution Convention of 1898.

Chapter V of the Australian Constitution, which is entitled, "The States", sets out under section 107 that the powers that belonged to the states prior to Federation, if they had not specifically been listed as an exclusive Commonwealth power, remained powers of the states (Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act, 1900, s107). For over forty years after Federation, education at all levels, from universities to schools, was accepted as a state power.

3.2.3 The Commonwealth Takeover of Income Tax, 1942

The first step in the Commonwealth's involvement in schooling came through the financial crisis of the Second World War. Faced with the very real threat of having to deal with a Japanese invasion, the Commonwealth Government argued that the need to "wage war effectively" (Wireless to The New York Times, 1942, 6) justified taking over all the income tax collections that had previously been the function of each state government. Once income tax became a Commonwealth prerogative in 1942 (Tannock, 1975), the states were deprived of the income they had used to fund their schools. This was such a serious concern that four of the six states (Queensland, South Australia, Victoria and Western Australia) challenged

the Commonwealth's take-over of income tax in the High Court of Australia (South Australia v. Commonwealth, 1942).

The case put by the states to the High Court demonstrated a clear indication of the strength of their commitment to the responsibilities that were theirs under the Australian Constitution. Their objection to what they called "a scheme to force the States, against their will, out of the income-tax tax field" was that it would "interfere with the powers and functions ... of State governments in administering the various services of the States for which taxation revenue - determined in both quantity and quality by State Parliaments - is indispensable" (South Australia v. Commonwealth, 1942). Education was one of the most important of these services. It involved funding the provision and maintenance of public schooling at primary and secondary levels (including the development of curriculum), as well as post-school technical, teacher training and university education (Mackinnon & Proctor, n.d.).

In the end, however, the High Court upheld the actions of the Commonwealth Government in taking over the states' income tax rights. The states were now forced to depend on grants allocated from the Commonwealth Government's income tax revenue to fund their schools.

The states, however, retained control of the organisation and administration of schools. According to the website for the Australian Government Department for Education and Training

Under constitutional arrangements, state and territory governments are responsible for ensuring the delivery and regulation of schooling to all

children of school age in their jurisdictions...They determine curriculums, register schools, regulate school activities and are directly responsible for the administration of government schools. (Department Education & Training, n.d.).

In the decades following the Second World War, the funding of schools continued to reflect this arrangement. State governments were predominantly responsible for the funding of government schools, through Commonwealth grants, most recently from the carve up of Goods and Services Tax (GST) funding to the states. Some non-government schools received funding from the Commonwealth Government providing supplementary funding (Department of Education and Training, n.d.).

3.2.4 Commonwealth Support for Schooling 1960-1988

The involvement of the Commonwealth in schooling has, according to one view, been slowly increasing in the years since Federation (Birch, 1977), but certainly since the Second World War, beginning with special funding arrangements. In the years immediately following the Second World War, most states suffered a crisis in the provision of schooling for the rapidly increasing number of school aged children due partly to the post-war baby boom and partly to the arrival of children of immigrant parents. As a result, the states were anxious to receive additional Commonwealth funding (Taylor, 2018). The Commonwealth had the right to grant funding for “any purpose” and this had been accepted in High Court precedents “as meaning within the powers held by the Commonwealth or within the powers held by the States” under the Australian Constitution (McCulloch, 1975, 1). Thus, the Commonwealth Government has been able to influence education in schools through the distribution of funding to the states, linked to school programs (Tannock, 1975). For example, while Robert Menzies, who was Prime Minister 1939-1941 and 1949-1966, held that education was the

responsibility of the states alone, he initiated Commonwealth influence in schools through the 1966 Commonwealth Secondary Schools Laboratories Scheme (Smart, 1976; Taylor, 2018). This program set a precedent for the provision of “school aid initiatives” (Smart, 1976, 242), such as the Disadvantaged Schools Program of the Schools Commission from the late 1970s and the languages education funding for teaching languages other than English in the 1980s (Task Force to Investigate Multiculturalism and Education & Smolicz, 1984; Commonwealth Department of Education & Lo Bianco, 1987).

The need for greater consultation and co-operation between the states and the Commonwealth in relation to schooling in Australia had been recognised as early as the 1960s. Under the Menzies Liberal Coalition Government, representatives from the Commonwealth, including the Federal Minister for Education, John Gorton, once he was appointed in 1963, began to attend the Australian Education Council (AEC) meetings from 1966. Up to this point the council had been an opportunity for discussion among the State and Territory Ministers of Education only and for their executive officers to share their concerns and decide on co-operative approaches (Smart, 1976).

Despite the increased level of cooperation, it remains the case that, while states have been able to refer powers to the Commonwealth, as in relation to income taxation in 1942 (Singleton, Aitkin, Jinks & Warhust, 2006), education up to now has not been referred to the Commonwealth Government. As a result, whenever the Commonwealth decided to fund new initiatives in schools, it required the co-operation of the states, with whom the power of education still resided (Yates, Collins & O’Connor, 2011).

3.2.5 State-Commonwealth Consultations and Funding Arrangements 1989-2007

The AEC meetings can be regarded as the forerunner of the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA), which was set up by the Commonwealth Minister of Education in 1989. This council of Commonwealth, State and Territory Ministers of Education met regularly and issued Declarations of their determinations and future policy directions, usually named after the city in which their meeting was held.

In the early 2000s, the Commonwealth began to use the promise of more funding as an incentive to gain the co-operation of less than willing state governments. The announcement of new Commonwealth education policy initiatives in 2004 by the then Minister for Education, Brendan Nelson, of a federal education package, which linked the availability of funds to a National Values Framework, was a good example of funding being used to influence the education policies of the state governments (Clark, 2006). This sort of strategy by the Commonwealth Minister, seen also in a bill to provide Commonwealth funding to schools from 2006 to 2008, has been described as a “focus on tied funding as a means of ensuring state compliance with new policy directions” (Brennan, 2011, 261). Some have labelled this sort of arrangement as an example of the “shared” responsibility between the two levels of government (Hinz, 2010, 2). However, the existence of any form of partnership rested on the fact that the states were generally dependent on the funding provided by the Commonwealth to meet their spending requirements (Hinz, 2010).

This policy link to funding was significant in that it allowed the Commonwealth Government to exert considerable control over the states, regardless of their residual responsibility for school education (Capano, 2015). Hinz (2010, 3), a Policy Fellow at the Mitchell Institute at Victoria University, referred to the “strong centralising trend over time” in Australia, with Jones (2008) claiming that it had been particularly evident in the previous decade.

One of the topics discussed regularly at the Council of Commonwealth, State and Territory Ministers was the possibility of developing a national curriculum for all Australian schools. Several supposed benefits were put forward to support its introduction. These benefits included transparency, improving the consistency of educational standards and the ease of movement for students shifting between states and territories (Brennan, 2011). School curriculum had always been considered a state matter, so there were differing curriculums in each state. This left students who moved interstate having to cope with variations between what was taught at each year level in the different states; often they found themselves at a different educational level to their peers in the same grade level at their new school. While there was some consistency across state curriculum, due to the previously mentioned meetings between states, it was left up to state governments to act on any proposed changes, with the result that differences remained between states. This issue was highlighted in particular as a problem faced by the children of defence personnel. Another argument put forward to support the introduction of a national curriculum and the greater centralisation of education included the promotion of “national cohesion” and a sense that “we are all Australian” (Harris-Hart, 2010, 297). A third argument was the advantage to the states of the sharing of costly resources (Harris-Hart, 2010). One curriculum for the whole of Australia

would mean that states would be relieved of the cost involved in the on-going writing and re-writing of all the various curriculum subjects at all levels.

The Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) agreed to proceed with a new national curriculum in 2008. The announcement was included in the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians, 2008.

3.3 The Australian Curriculum as a Joint Commonwealth-State Enterprise, 2008-2013

The shift towards greater Commonwealth involvement in school education reached a new level when the organisation called the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) was established specifically to have the authority over primary and secondary schools throughout Australia in relation to matters of curriculum. Although the states had been involved in the preceding discussions in the Council of Ministers, the fact that ACARA was set up and funded as a statutory body, reporting to the Ministerial Council and directly to the Commonwealth Minister of Education by an Act of Federal Parliament (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority Act (Cth), 2008) is clear evidence that the Commonwealth had become, at this time, the dominant power in State-Commonwealth responsibilities for schooling in Australia. The Act meant that Federal control of schooling was now not just about the funding of primary and secondary schools in all states, but extended to the areas of the curriculum, assessment and reporting.

The role of ACARA in Australian schooling was reinforced by two other statutory authorities, similarly set up and funded under a Commonwealth Act of Parliament and reporting directly to the Commonwealth Minister of Education. The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership Limited (AITSL) oversees the pre-service training of teachers, the qualifications needed for teacher registration and teachers on-going professional development. Education Services Australia Limited was supposed to provide the education resources and materials needed for teaching the national curriculum (Education Services Australia Limited, N.d.).

It is important to understand the significance of the establishment of ACARA. According to one scholar from Deakin University, Harris-Hart (2010), there have been three types of State-Commonwealth relationships linked to the ideology which influenced the development of the national curriculum: corporate federalism, coercive federalism and co-operative federalism. While Commonwealth involvement in education and curriculum development had occurred gradually, the introduction of the Australian Curriculum represented a significant change. Harris-Hart (2010) argued that the ACARA Act, while having the appearance of a development in co-operative federalism, was, in fact, coercive. The implementation of the Australian Curriculum shows that the influence of the Commonwealth Government in education had increased considerably, with control of the curriculum being added to issues of funding.

Along with this, a shift in the perceived purpose of education occurred. The focus has shifted to centre on individual social mobility and business efficiency, rather than equity (Cranston, Kimber, Musford, Reid & Keating, 2010). Equality of

opportunity has already been discussed in Chapter Two as an important educational ideology in the 1970s in South Australia where it led to the restructuring of primary and secondary schools. For its part, the Commonwealth had introduced special funding to “bring all schools up to common resource standards, with some additional grants for disadvantaged schools” (Marginson, 1993, 207-8). The change over the late 1980s and 1990s to neo-liberal ideology has been seen as one of the factors which increased the need of state governments for additional school funding and made them more amenable to the greater control being extended by the Commonwealth Government (Ditchburn, 2012).

The link between Commonwealth funding for the schools of the states and territories and the support of the state authorities for the new education structures that the Commonwealth had established, became even more explicit in the Australian Education Act 2013 which came into effect in January 2014 (Australian Government, 2018). The Act “sets out the rights and responsibilities of authorities in order for them to receive Commonwealth funding for the purposes of school education” (Australian Government, 2018). Specifically, there was a conditional clause that constrained state responses: “A payment of financial assistance under this Act to a State or Territory is subject to the condition that the State or Territory implement national policy initiatives for school education in accordance with the regulations” (Australian Government, Australian Education Act 2013, Part 2, 22). These national policy initiatives which needed to be supported by the states were “the work of national education institutions (including the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership Ltd, and Education Services Australia Ltd)” (Australian Government, Australian Education Act 2013,

Part 2, 22). Harris-Hart's 2010 judgement of the "coercive" nature of the so-called "co-operative federalism" could be seen to be confirmed.

Since the introduction of the *ACHistory* and the Commonwealth structures associated with its development, the power of the Commonwealth over schooling in Australia has increased dramatically. These developments have reinforced the judgement of Hinz (2010, 2) that

Federalism should be understood as a complex and dynamic system of processes and institutions, embedded in, and interacting with society, and its operation is heavily dependent on the configuration of fiscal settings, political actors and opportunities.

While it could be argued that a move towards central policy would reduce the costs associated with Australia's current federal system, one risk associated with centralisation in education policy-making (as well as other areas) is the imposition of a "one size fits all approach" that lacks an understanding of the "diversity and the needs generated by regional difference" (Jones, 2008, 161). This concern became increasingly evident as the *ACHistory* moved further into the implementation phase.

3.4 The Process of Developing the *Australian Curriculum: History* according to ACARA

3.4.1 Overview

The development process of the Australian Curriculum and *ACHistory* was described as "extensive and consultative" by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), the body responsible for overseeing the development of the national curriculum (ACARA, n.d.). According

to ACARA the “four interrelated phases” of developing the Australian Curriculum involved: 1) curriculum shaping; 2) curriculum writing; 3) preparation for implementation; and 4) curriculum monitoring, evaluating and review. These four phases were set out on the ACARA website (ACARA, n.d.). The first phase was completed while the National Curriculum Board, which preceded ACARA, was still in place and included the release of shape papers for each subject. The shape paper for History was titled *Shape of the Australian Curriculum: History* (National Curriculum Board, 2009a). These papers were to provide broad directions for “the purpose, structure and organisation of the learning area” (ACARA, n.d.). During the shaping phase, consultation would take place, both targeted consultation with groups that had been identified as key stakeholders, as well as open public consultation (ACARA, n.d.).

The second phase was “writing”. This phase involved writers, in consultation with expert advisory groups and ACARA staff, developing content descriptions and achievement standards for the initial learning areas (History, English, Science, Mathematics). At this stage, drafts of the curriculum were to be released for public consultation before editing to reflect this feedback (ACARA, n.d.). The third phase of the development process, according to ACARA, was the “implementation” of the Australian Curriculum in the nation’s classrooms. This stage was in the control of the states and territories which were concerned to relate the implementation of the national document to the existing structures of their schools and the needs of their students. The fourth and final stage in the development process for the Australian Curriculum was “monitoring and evaluation” which was to include “analysing data on the effectiveness of the

Australian Curriculum” (ACARA, n.d.). These four stages together made up the overall development process of the Australian Curriculum.

Each stage of the Australian Curriculum development is looked at in more detail below in relation specifically to the *ACHistory*. The 2014 *Review of the Australian Curriculum* could be seen as part of the monitoring and a continuation of the evaluation phase. However, since it was initiated by a change of Commonwealth Government, rather than part of the process originally set in place by ACARA, it is perhaps better considered as a later addition imposed on the overall process.

3.4.2 The Curriculum Shaping

The first stage in the development of the national curriculum was the writing of a framing document, the *Shape of the Australian Curriculum*, intended to guide those who would write the new curriculum for various subjects. Lead writers and discipline specialists were appointed to develop each of the subject *Shape* papers and then act as consultants during the subsequent writing phase (ACARA, 2012). The criteria behind the selection of lead writers for subject areas was explained by ACARA in the following way:

Lead writers and discipline contributors are selected because of the esteem in which they are held in the community, their networks and their expertise in the learning area, that is, their deep knowledge of learning, pedagogy and contemporary professional practice. (ACARA, 2012, 11-12)

In the case of the *ACHistory*, the lead writer appointed was Stuart Macintyre, then Professor of History at the University of Melbourne.

The document, the *Shape of the Australian Curriculum*, followed the previously agreed position set out by the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians (Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, 2008) and was approved by the Council of Commonwealth and the state and territory ministers in 2009 (ACARA, n.d.).

In the case of History, the *Shape* paper began with a clear statement of the important qualities and value of History as a subject in the curriculum: “history is a discipline with its own methods and procedures. It deepens our understanding of humanity, creativity, purposes and values. History draws on and contributes to other bodies of knowledge.” (National Curriculum Board, 2009a, 4). In this way, History was identified as its own discipline with distinct qualities and methods, which the new History curriculum would emphasise and develop.

As the *Shape* paper put it, “The content of the national history curriculum [would] be based on the interrelationship between historical knowledge, understanding and skills” (National Curriculum Board, 2009a, 6). A rough time period for each age group to study in History through a world history context was outlined, with potential topics suggested, such as the focus on family history in the early years, together with the skills that were expected to be learned at each level. Some suggestions were also included on the direction for History at Years 11 and 12, the senior secondary years beyond the national curriculum, which was intended for Foundation to Year 10. Although the *Shape* paper provided a broad outline of the directions and scope of the national curriculum for History, it did not go into detail. The drafts of the *ACHistory*, which followed the consultation on the *Shape* paper were expected to provide the details.

The *Shape* paper provided a number of directions for the writers of the *ACHistory* to follow. For instance, the document set out the proposed aims of teaching History through the Australian Curriculum.

Through school history students develop knowledge and understanding of the past in order to appreciate themselves and others, to understand the present and to contribute to debate about planning for the future. (National Curriculum Board, 2009a, 5)

Furthermore, the skills outlined through the History curriculum were intended to encourage students to become “active and informed” citizens (National Curriculum Board, 2009a, 5). A second direction made clear in the *Shape* documents was that the History curriculum should be written to encourage both “teacher-directed and student-centred learning”. In this way, the curriculum would enhance students’ own ability “to pose and investigate questions with increasing initiative, self-direction and expertise” (National Curriculum Board, 2009a, 15). In this way students would be encouraged to formulate their own questions and, with help, be able to learn and research independently.

A third more practical direction given to the writers of the *ACHistory* was to “avoid excessive repetition” (National Curriculum Board, 2009a, 15). This seems to have been achieved mainly by specifying certain time periods, places and themes that students should study at each level, rather than listing specific events. This meant that each year level would be looking at a different time-period in a way that would give teachers more flexibility in deciding which topics within a given period would best cater for the interests of their students. Flexibility was to be a key component of the curriculum; according to the *Shape* paper, it should give enough guidance to help beginning teachers, yet enough options for

experienced teachers to use their skills and knowledge (National Curriculum Board, 2009a, 15).

The conclusion of *The Shape* paper for History highlighted the significance of the new curriculum from the perspective of those involved in its writing.

History is a story, told by many story tellers, that links the past to the present. Through an understanding of their own and others' stories, students develop an appreciation of the richness of the human past and its implications for the future.

For the first time in Australia's history, there will be a national curriculum that will describe what all students should learn in history. The curriculum will enable teachers to engage students in meaningful, challenging and interesting ways to tap into their innate curiosity about the world. (National Curriculum Board, 2009a, 16)

This excerpt demonstrates two perspectives at work behind the development of the *ACHistory*. First, there is the recognition that history is made up of multiple stories coming together to form a picture of great detail and depth of perspective, because it has been told by multiple "story tellers". However, this is juxtaposed with a second perspective, the aspiration to craft a national curriculum that would be able to engage all Australian students through its flexibility.

A period of public consultation on the framing paper for History was open from 20 November 2008 until 28 February 2009 (National Curriculum Board, 2009b). The intention was to give as many members of the public as possible the opportunity to comment on the *Shape* papers in order for the National Curriculum Board to gain feedback for rewriting the framing papers prior to them becoming the "foundational documents for writing the national curriculum" (National

Curriculum Board, 2009b, 4). The consultation for this phase of the development process was summarised in a report that was released at the end.

Included in the report were details of the general community groups, such as teachers or academics, that raised particular concerns and suggested possible actions that could be taken to address them (National Curriculum Board, 2009b). A number of the concerns expressed related to basic issues of classroom organisation, such as the allocation of teaching hours for History in schools, the provision of appropriate teacher training at the pre-service level and the availability of effective resources to guide teachers. The report noted that such matters were implementation issues rather than related to the framing of the curriculum. As such, they were “outside the remit of the Board” (National Curriculum Board, 2009b, 11). Further discussion on the implementation process is included later in this chapter.

3.4.3 The Curriculum Writing Process

The writing stage of the development process for the *ACHistory* began in 2009.

This stage involved

teams of writers, supported by expert advisory groups, and include[d] key periods of consultation — open public consultation as well as targeted consultation with key stakeholders including teachers and schools (through intensive engagement activities), state and territory education authorities, parents and students, professional associations, teacher unions, universities and industry and community groups (ACARA, 2012, 6).

The members of the advisory group included university professors and the president from the History Teachers’ Association of Australia (ACARA, n.d.).

This group “provide[d] advice on draft materials at key stages in the development process” (ACARA, 2012, 13). Others involved in the writing process included the

lead writer, Stuart Macintyre, who was appointed during the shaping phase, (ACARA, 2012), as well as those appointed to do the curriculum writing.

The role of the lead writer was summarised as being responsible for developing the initial shape paper (ACARA, 2012, 12), and then acting as a consultant during the writing phase. The other key group involved in this process was the curriculum writers, appointed through a national selection process (ACARA, 2012, 13). As stated in the process document:

The role of writers is to complete the writing task in accordance with the parameters and writing instructions established through the Shape of the Australian Curriculum paper, the relevant Shape of the Australian Curriculum: <learning area> paper, the Curriculum Design paper, and any other directions provided by ACARA. (ACARA, 2012, 13)

At the end of the writing stage, which concluded at the end of 2011, the first version of the F-10 *ACHistory* was published on the Australian Curriculum website (ACARA, n.d.).

3.4.4 The Implementation Stage and State Responses

While the Australian Curriculum was generally referred to as a national curriculum, implementation of the curriculum in schools was not undertaken by federal education bodies. ACARA's involvement at this stage was limited to

delivery of the curriculum to school authorities and to schools in an online environment in time for school authorities, schools and teachers to prepare for implementation. Implementation and implementation support are the responsibility of state and territory school and curriculum authorities. ACARA works with state and territory curriculum and school authorities to support their ongoing implementation planning by providing briefings,

introductory information materials and national facilitation for planning. (ACARA, 2012, 6).

The ACARA statement made it quite clear that, a lack of clearly defined boundaries between these two levels of government, in relation to education, despite the increasing shift towards federal involvement, was seen clearly in the implementation process. The Australian Curriculum, was supposedly a “national” curriculum, yet each state government was separately responsible for implementing this curriculum in its schools.

The fact that the implementation of the *ACHistory*, in particular, was the responsibility of each state or territory jurisdiction, not that of the Commonwealth Government has opened up a new research focus. In the three states selected for this research there were differences in the approaches to implementing the curriculum in schools, reflecting the varying ways the national curriculum was viewed in each state. Prior to the Australian Curriculum each state worked from its own curriculum: in South Australia this was the South Australian Curriculum Standards and Accountability Framework (SACSA); Western Australia used the Western Australian Curriculum Framework; and Victoria had developed its own Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS). Implementation timelines for the History Curriculum in each state were similar (although not the same) in that planning and preparation began around 2011 (ACARA, 2014). Western Australia developed the Western Australian Curriculum and Assessment Outline in 2012, with a formal three-year period of implementation beginning in July that year. In Victoria, AusVELS was used initially in Government and Catholic schools in 2013 and was available for use in independent schools. As of December 2016, AusVELS was replaced with the Victorian Curriculum Foundation-10 (VC). In

South Australia, although there were some variations across the three sectors (Catholic, state, independent), implementation of the *ACHistory* began in 2013 (ACARA, 2014).

With the implementation left in the hands of individual state governments to oversee, differences have emerged between the *ACHistory* as it is offered in each state. States such as Western Australia and Victoria have chosen to incorporate elements of the Australian Curriculum into new state-based curricula. Both have taken the approach of incorporating the Australian Curriculum into their own Curriculum frameworks in order to better adapt the curriculum to their own state contexts. For instance, the Western Australian Curriculum, released at the end of 2016, took the place of the Australian Curriculum in Western Australian schools (SCSA, 2014). The development of this state-based curriculum was announced early in the implementation stage of the Australian Curriculum in this state (ACARA, 2014, 9). The Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority website stated that,

The Victorian Curriculum F-10 is the new curriculum for Victorian schools. It incorporates the Australian Curriculum and reflects Victorian standards and priorities.

The AusVELS curriculum was the initial incorporation of the Australian Curriculum areas of English, Mathematics, History and Science into the Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS). The AusVELS curriculum will continue to be available until December 2016. (VCAA, n.d.a)

In Western Australia, the *ACHistory* has been changed into a combined Humanities and Social Sciences subject in both primary and secondary years. The Western Australian School Curriculum and Standards Authority stated around the time of the 2014 review, that,

Recognising that schools are currently implementing History, this syllabus will currently remain in place until Dec 2016. After this time, History context is embedded in the Humanities and Social Sciences syllabus. (SCSA, 2014)

This change was announced in 2015 and meant that in Western Australia history was subsumed into a broader learning area, rather than maintained as a stand-alone subject. In addition some of the depth study options that were originally intended as part of the Australian Curriculum (National Curriculum Board, 2009a, 12) in order to allow teachers to choose topics that they felt best suited their class or context were no longer be taught in Western Australia as of December 2016 (Garnett & Blagaich, 2015). For instance, at Year 9 the Industrial Revolution depth study, which was one of three options under the Australian Curriculum, is now a compulsory depth study in Western Australian schools using the Western Australian Curriculum, meaning that the other options of “Progressive ideas and movements” and “Movement of people” as depth studies are no longer available (SCSA, 2014).

In South Australia notable changes in curriculum have occurred in the Senior Secondary (Years 11 and 12) years instead of at the F-10 level, with new South Australian Certificate of Education (SACE) subjects released that were adapted to reflect the approaches of the Australian Curriculum for these senior year levels.

It is clear that the Australian Constitution has influenced the last stages of the development process surrounding the Australian Curriculum, through the fact that its implementation remained in control of the state governments. This has left room for the states to move away from the original conception of a national curriculum and to adapt the curriculum in ways that suited them.

3.4.5 Monitoring Stage and the On-going Review

The final stage of the development process of the Australian Curriculum, according to ACARA, was monitoring and assessing the effectiveness of the curriculum. This stage was seen to be ongoing (ACARA, 2012, 7) and included reviewing the curriculum. The proposal involved “annual reports to the ACARA Board detailing any issues identified. Analysis of the issues and any recommended actions, including any that might include further investigation” (ACARA, 2012, 7). Unlike the actual implementation in school phase, the monitoring of the Australian Curriculum was to be arranged by ACARA. However, the role of ACARA included working with state and territory education authorities to gather data about issues such as “areas for which teachers require ongoing support in order to teach the curriculum” (ACARA, 2012, 7). As part of this phase of the curriculum development process, ACARA was to

provide a monitoring framework, including research questions and associated data gathering, which can be used by state and territory education authorities as part of their own monitoring strategies, to assist in their collection and provision of state and territory data about the Australian Curriculum to ACARA. The evaluation process may result in minor changes to, or a revision of, the curriculum. (ACARA, 2012, 7)

In this way the curriculum monitoring and review phase was projected as a joint effort between state and federal bodies, with the role of ACARA being to work in partnership with state and territory authorities (ACARA, 2012, 7). It could be argued that the *Review of the Australian Curriculum* which occurred in 2014 was the first step in the monitoring phase, but up to 2018 there was no further evidence of such activity.

3.5 Media Commentary on the Initial Stages up to 2014

In 2010, when the Australian Curriculum was still under development and comprised, at that stage, just the four phase one subjects (English, Mathematics, Science and History), it was being promoted as a “back-to-basics” national curriculum. In the media, the Australian Curriculum was reported as a blueprint of the “essential knowledge and skills children across the nation need to know” by a key journalist from *The Australian* at this time (Ferrari, 2010a). The fact that History was included as one of these “basic” subjects seemed, at the time, to raise the profile of the subject and to promote its perceived importance. The potential for states to be able to share and develop resources was highlighted as a distinctly positive benefit for teachers who would be able to collaborate and support colleagues in other states (Ferrari, 2010a).

Most media articles at this time focused on the content of the *ACHistory* and the political debate surrounding what was and was not included. Such content criticisms of the *ACHistory* could be broadly linked back to the development process and the way this was viewed in the media. Some writers predicted that the new national *ACHistory* would lead to a further advance into the history and culture wars that had emerged in previous generations (Aly, 2010). In contrast,

The Australian at this time, praised the *ACHistory* as “a way through the history wars” (Ferrari, 2010b).

Claims of bias in the first version of the *ACHistory* and the *Shape of the Australian Curriculum: History* document, for instance, suggested a lack of confidence in the process that was set up to develop a balanced curriculum. Such articles criticised the *ACHistory* for being “spoiled by political correctness” (Mason, 2010) or missing “the absolute fundamentals of Western civilisation” (Berg, 2011). These comments were mainly found in articles that reported the views of then shadow Minister for Education, Christopher Pyne (Blake, 2013) and those of former Prime Minister, John Howard (Shannon, 2012).

Along with being labelled “unbalanced” in some media articles (Hudson & Larkin, 2010; Daley, 2014), the *ACHistory* was also criticised for being “too ambitious” (Ferrari, 2010a; Patty, 2010). This description referred to the overall scope of the curriculum and the breadth of content. This criticism was recognised by the lead writer, Stuart Macintyre, who agreed in 2010, before the writing of the History curriculum was complete, that “the draft curriculum required greater focus and the culling of some topics” (Ferrari, 2010c). Because no commitment to a set number of hours for teaching History had been made by the states (Ferrari, 2010a), criticisms emerged that amount of content was too much for the likely teaching time the subject would be allocated.

Some articles commented specifically on the development process behind the *ACHistory* and the issues that surfaced around this. Ferrari’s article, mentioned above, raised concerns from the lead writer of the *ACHistory*, Stuart Macintyre

over the consultation process. Decisions had been made to alter the History course without any consultation with the writers of the curriculum and expert advisory groups (Ferrari, 2010c).

A lack of properly trained History teachers, particularly for the primary years, and the need for professional development in preparation for the implementation of the *ACHistory* were other issues that were raised in the media's criticism of the initial stages (Mason, 2010; Ferrari, 2010c). The then History Teachers' Association of Australia president, Paul Kiem, also raised these issues when he spoke to the media in 2010. His view was reportedly shared by other teachers (Ferrari, 2010a). Such concerns were linked not so much to the writing stage as to the overall process that went into developing the *ACHistory* and planning for its initial implementation.

The concern over teachers' ability and readiness to teach the new curriculum was apparent in the media at this time, as an example of a conflict of interest between the Commonwealth and the states over implementation. Lead writer, Stuart Macintyre lamented the "impasse between the states and the Commonwealth government over who was going to pay for the teaching resources and training" (Ferrari, 2010c). With each state and territory pushing for different priorities, there was a concern that this could result in a "lesser quality" curriculum (Patty, 2010). This criticism was especially levelled by those in NSW who believed that the History curriculum offered under the Australian Curriculum was inferior to the History course already run in schools in that state (Patty, 2010).

Although quite a number of media articles were critical of the *ACHistory*, others offered praise. Most of this praise was linked to the content and the development of a History curriculum that was considered to be as balanced as was possible, focussing neither on the “black armband” nor the “three cheers” view of history. Other commentators did not share this view; charges of imbalance and bias were raised in both the media and the political arena (Aly, 2010; Howard, 2006; Hudson & Larkin, 2010).

3.6 Challenging the Initial Stages: The Academic View up to 2014

Academic articles on the development of the *ACHistory* up to 2014 focused on a number of concerns. Although some discussed the document itself, more were concerned about the practical implications of the document for implementation in schools (Rodwell, 2013; Marsh & Hart, 2011; Gilbert, 2011; Whiteley, 2012). Matters of implementation were at the nexus of shared Commonwealth and state responsibilities. How much content could be included in the curriculum, for example, was closely related to the hours allocated for teaching History, a matter which lay within the control of the states, and even different jurisdictions and schools. The preparation of new and existing teachers for introducing the new curriculum into their classrooms, which was an essential part of the implementation, required additional funding but was the responsibility of the states. At the farthest extreme was the academic who expressed scepticism about the potential longevity of the *ACHistory* (Brennan, 2011).

The curriculum document as the outcome of the development process was sometimes the point of critique, both for its structure, as well as its content. For instance, Martin (2013, 19) stated that,

The curriculum aims to promote a disciplined process of inquiry using and applying the central historical understandings of evidence, continuity and change, cause and effect, significance, perspectives, empathy and contestability to engage historical inquiries. Their use in the curriculum lacks an explicit presence as they are often hidden within the strands, or worse, are eliminated to elaborations. Also, their application fails to highlight the explicit interrelationships between the historical knowledge, understanding and skills.

Martin (2012, 10) also considered that the curriculum document, and the consultation that followed, should have included not only the knowledge to be taught, but also a focus on “how it should be taught”.

Another critic of the writing process in the *ACHistory* was Paul Kiem, former president of the History Teachers’ Association of Australia (HTAA), who described the concerns he had in a personal reflection. Kiem (2011, 61) regarded the writing process as “a long series of poorly structured conversations where sound bites are written into or out of a draft at random”. He was critical of the “need to accommodate the views of roving bands of experts, stakeholders, curriculum engineers and board members who display limited knowledge of history and how it is taught” (Kiem, 2011, 61). Overall, Kiem considered the development of the *ACHistory* to be “a deeply flawed process ACARA has presided over” (Kiem, 2011, 61). This sort of criticism had also emerged in some media articles discussed in the previous section (Ferrari, 2010a; Patty 2010).

Other writers expressed their satisfaction with the curriculum document. For instance, in comparing the proposed curriculum, as illustrated in the *Shape* paper, to other international history curricula, Guyver (2009, 16) concluded that “It is a mature and judicious compromise, offering in its syntactic and substantive

structures a fusing of the scholarly, the interesting and the practical, or, in teacher parlance, the ‘do-able’”.

Another area of criticism that emerged about the development process behind the Australian Curriculum was the structure and time allowed for consultation. As Atweh and Singh (2011, 190) pointed out:

some commentators (for example, Allum, 2009) suggested that the time frame for consultation was restrictive and prohibited the generation of meaningful and substantive conversations. In addition, concerns were raised about equitable state and regional access and participation in the national curriculum conversation (Atweh & Clarkson, 2010). (Atweh & Singh, 2011, 190)

These comments suggest that short time frames for submitting feedback could have limited not only the depth of discussions about the curriculum, but also the number of people who could find time to respond within the deadline. Another writer noted the participation of academics and teachers was restricted because they could not be freed from their substantive roles.

the timeline for development has meant little capacity could be freed up at the state level among people already engaged in full-time jobs, in a devolved environment. Nor has the expertise of teachers been given opportunity for being shared across the country (Brennan, 2011, 268).

One area that generated comment was the implementation of the curriculum, with comments generally focused on teaching the curriculum at the classroom level. An issue that Kiem identified as unresolved even at the end of the process was “a failure to take account of the actual teaching time that history courses are likely to be given” (Kiem, 2011, 61). He considered this needed to be worked out in order to avoid “content overload” at certain year levels. The education of new teachers

being properly equipped to teach the national curriculum was another key implementation issue raised. Linked to it was the need for professional development for teachers already in schools. This issue was emphasised by the History Teachers' Associations, as well as academic observers who noted the dilemmas which would be faced in the enacted curriculum. The challenges involved in teaching a new history curriculum with an ageing workforce and a limited number of graduate history teachers being trained and then retained in schools were of particular concern (Taylor, 2010). Atweh and Singh (2011, 192) also argued that 'effective implementation of this type of [content based] curricular model requires significant initial and ongoing professional development of teachers'.

What made the implementation issues raised a matter of great concern was the fact that they could not be resolved by the Commonwealth, as Whiteley explained.

The professional learning requirements needed to fully understand and implement each of these crucial learning areas, was never part of the ACARA process of curriculum development. That role has been designated to individual State and Territory Curriculum Authorities (Whiteley, 2012, 61).

This designation was based on the Australian constitution. As Brennan (2011, 264) stated, constitutionally, "education authority remains with the states, unless referred to the Commonwealth Government" (Brennan, 2011, 264). In her view, it seemed unlikely that the states would be willing to cede control of this area.

At the most fundamental level, one academic argued that this latest attempt at a national curriculum was unlikely to be successful. Previous attempts at a national

curriculum in Australia had not managed to survive past the initial phases of development. As Marie Brennan, from the University of South Australia, explained,

The existence of ACARA is no guarantee that national curriculum will continue as an educational or political project. After all, previous bodies such as the Curriculum Corporation, the Australian Teaching Council, the National Institute for Quality Teaching and School Leadership, Teaching Australia, the National Curriculum Board and, to go further back, the Schools Commission and the Curriculum Development Centre have all fallen by the wayside. Unless there is significant infrastructure built in to build links across sectors, across levels of government and, most importantly, among teachers and between teachers and policy bodies, national curriculum is likely not to work. (Brennan, 2011, 270-271)

Taylor, who was involved in the early development of the *ACHistory*, claimed, “it’s not the nature of a published curriculum that is likely to be the real problem, it’s in the implementation that a curriculum stands or falls” (Taylor, 2010, 61). It can be argued therefore that the implementation of the *ACHistory*, which was the responsibility of state and territory governments, was the vital final part of the development process and a decisive influence on whether the curriculum was viewed positively or negatively.

3.7 A Moral Panic? The Debate over the *ACHistory* up to the 2014

Review

The cultural warriors were all lined up ready for the next round of the history wars when the *Review of the Australian Curriculum* (subsequently called the 2014 review) was announced in January 2014. The review was initiated after the 2013 change in federal government and the new Minister for Education set in motion

the review process to assess “the robustness, independence and balance of the process of development and content of the Australian Curriculum” (Department of Education, 2014a, 8). The review was to focus on:

the scope and structure of the Australian Curriculum, development processes, the curriculum content from Foundation to Year 12 (or other years as applicable) in all learning areas completed to date as well the nature of its implementation in states and territories. (Department of Education, 2014a, 8)

As not all curriculum learning areas had been either completed or implemented at the time, the 2014 review did not include learning areas such as languages. History, as one of the first subjects developed, was included in the review as a separate learning area, along with subjects such as English, Science, Geography, and Civics and citizenship (Department of Education, 2014a, IV).

In contrast to the fears and anxieties evident after the initial announcement of the 2014 review, a sense of confusion seemed to emerge when the findings, released later that year, proved to be not quite what had been expected. When evaluating the reception of the *ACHistory*, the researcher needs to carefully consider the political context in which it arose and how this changed in the following years. The History curriculum, released initially under a Labor government in 2009 was criticised for focusing too heavily on the political view of Australia’s history linked to that government. This political context could be seen as a motivation behind the new Coalition government’s 2014 review and the expectation that this would lead to the resumption of the culture wars. According to Rodwell (2017), the controversy surrounding the Australian Curriculum as a whole, and the History curriculum in particular, could be seen to have elements of a moral panic

and concern over a risk to Australian society. This section looks at some of the media comments surrounding the *ACHistory*, what a moral panic is, and how, if at all, the concept of moral panic can be related to the *ACHistory*, especially in the light of the *détente* or truce that seemed to emerge once the results of the review were released at the end of 2014.

3.7.1 The *Australian Curriculum: History*, the Coalition Government's Review and the Media

The first stirrings of “moral panic” over History education in Australia can be traced back to John Howard’s time as Prime Minister (1996-2007). Threads of the same panic or anxiety can be seen running through until the 2014 review into the Australian Curriculum. Concern over students’ ignorance in general is a recurring topic in the media. Concern over students’ ability to read, write, and their performance in Mathematics and Science. PISA/OECD test scores that showed Australia’s children were falling behind their foreign counter-parts have often been held up in newspaper articles as evidence of Australian children’s ignorance and that they were falling behind in standards (Munro & Bagshaw, 2016). One US academic, Ungar, who researched the effects of the media in social sciences and cultural literacy, has stated that “the young are uniquely targeted as a group for their general lack of knowledge” (Ungar, 2008, 309). The concern over students’ literacy and numeracy has generally been linked by politicians and the media to the nation’s competitiveness in an increasingly globalised world (Ungar, 2008). However, the question arises as to whether History fits into this pattern of basic literacy and numeracy.

One important issue in trying to understand moral panics is: who benefits from the panic? In the case of basic literacy and numeracy, who gains by generating

concern over the ignorance of Australia's youth and the education they are receiving? An examination of educational initiatives in the last ten years shows the rise of NAPLAN and the MySchool website. Both of these initiatives were heralded as necessary to increase the accountability of teachers and schools, with resulting benefits flowing, supposedly, to parents and students. Whether they have been successful or not in this would be a different discussion. A related suggestion about the motivation for creating a sense of moral panic is that it provides politicians with the opportunity to step in with a simple solution to solve the problem (Cricher, 2003, 17). In this instance, the demonstration that literacy and numeracy levels were falling led to the solution that there needed to be increased accountability of teachers and schools in order for student achievement levels to rise.

In the case of History as a subject in Australian schools, John Howard identified a left-wing bias (Aly, 2010; Howard, 2006) in History education with a resultant lack of national pride. His solution was to create a national History curriculum to replace the various state curricula. The History summit, which was called later in 2006 to begin developing a national History curriculum, was allegedly used by Prime Minister, John Howard, to attempt to introduce a conservative History syllabus (Taylor, 2009). At the time there was criticism of the perceived renewed introduction of the "history wars" in classrooms, particularly in relation to the way John Howard's ideology influenced the move to make the History curriculum "a single story" (Ashton & Hamilton, 2007, 46). Indeed, the Howard years have been identified as a time when the "teaching of Australian history became politicised" (Ferrari, 2010). However, with the election of a labour government in 2007, the draft 2006 curriculum was never implemented.

History in schools has often been seen by politicians as a tool to promote “patriotic citizenship”, although the definition of what makes a patriotic Australian is fluid, making it hard to clarify (Haynes, 2009). Similarly, specific reasons behind the concern over whether or not Australian youth are able to feel pride about their nation may also be hard to identify. The idea that History can be used to shape a nation’s identity in its citizens’ minds makes it an attractive subject to politicians (Gilbert, 2011) and may account for some of the struggle seen between the left and the right sides of politics to tell the story each one sees as correct. This use of history for ideological means is not unique to Australia as has been found by studies examining the development of History curricula in selected European nations and the identification of ideological purposes for which they were used (Wilschut, 2010).

3.7.2 The Reception of Australian Curriculum

When Kevin Rudd came to power as the Labour leader in 2007 the push for a national curriculum continued, but now it was to encompass all subjects, not just History. However, the concern by the conservative side of politics over History education did not diminish with the arrival of the Rudd and Gillard governments. The new *ACHistory* was developed, but concern over a lack of national pride in Australia’s youth had not been alleviated, particularly not with a Labor government in charge while the curriculum was written.

Media articles from around the time the History curriculum draft was first released in 2009, and even earlier before it was released, demonstrate that conservative commentators such as Kevin Donnelly, a former Liberal staff member, were not impressed (Donnelly, 2008a). First, with the release of the *Shape of the Australian Curriculum: History* paper and the draft of the curriculum, and then followed up at almost every step in relation to the curriculum

after this, there was a flurry of articles in the media, particularly in publications like *The Australian*, concerning the *ACHistory* and fears that it was being used, or could be used, to indoctrinate students to one way of viewing the past. One concern that seemed to grow was that the *ACHistory* was ignoring Australia's 'Judeo-Christian' heritage and was failing to teach students about the positives, such as democracy, that had arisen out of the nation's western heritage (Donnelly, 2011b). Christian groups were concerned that Christianity was mainly mentioned in relation to topics such as the Black Death or the Crusades, topics that could lead to students forming a negative view of the religion (Daintree, 2010). Kevin Donnelly also raised concerns about the ability of schools to set their own curriculum. Donnelly's statements on the Australian Curriculum included:

Whereas most schools around Australia now have the freedom to implement the state mandated curriculum or equivalent, under the Rudd/Gillard education revolution such flexibility is denied and schools will lose funding if they refuse to comply with what the government dictates (Donnelly, 2010a).

In an article for the ABC he showed concern that 'schools across Australia will soon be forced to teach a new-age and politically correct view of history and Australia's place in the world.' (Donnelly, 2010b). Similarly, in an article in *Australian Conservative*, he wrote:

Much like the socialist economies of the old eastern bloc, the assumption is by centralising control, defining outputs, forming committees, setting targets and enforcing a top down model of management that government dictates will be implemented. (Donnelly, 2010c)

Anxiety was obviously rising amongst those on the political right that school students in Australia would have a left-wing view of history forced upon them, with no room for the other perspectives in the history debate. Donnelly was not alone in his criticism of the *ACHistory*, with others also expressing concern that

students would not learn about topics vital to Australia's past and that the new curriculum was not at all balanced. "There is a growing belief among Australia's most formidable conservative thinkers that the foundations of Western civilisation are being eroded" (Coorey, 2010), one commentator declared. Another wrote that

If the new National Curriculum sounds like the return and the entrenchment of the "black armband" view of our history, you can be forgiven for being confused. Unlike the drafters, the Coalition- as well as a large majority of Australians- believe that, on balance and for all its faults, Australia's history is a cause for celebration rather than constant breast-beating. (Mason, 2010)

John Howard himself criticised the draft of the History curriculum in an article in *The Australian*. In it he wrote, "The draft history curriculum released by the commonwealth government has praiseworthy features, but there is much about the curriculum that I find unbalanced and in some cases quite bizarre" (Howard, 2012).

There was it seemed, a consistent concern about the *ACHistory* that was gaining space in Australia's media, perhaps unsurprising, considering this was the first time a national curriculum had managed to be successfully drafted and implemented in Australia's history. The curriculum was labelled "unbalanced" and "biased" (Mason, 2010; Howard, 2012; Berg, 2012; Blake, 2013b).

Christopher Pyne, then shadow Minister for Education, also commented on the History curriculum and announced that, should the Coalition form government, there would be a review into the Australian Curriculum (Blake, 2013). This was seen by many as an indication that Pyne was considering a new foray into the culture wars that had been a feature of the Howard years (Taylor, 2014a). A culture war, in this case, is essentially defined as a conflict between conservative

or traditional values and progressive values in the interpretation of historical events (Cricher, 2003), and it seems clear that concern around the History curriculum was once again warming up to become the next culture war.

3.7.3 Was it a Moral Panic?

The usefulness of using a moral panic model to explain events in History education is debatable. The political context which the curriculum was developed in may or may not have shaped the curriculum as claimed. However, there seemed to be a general feeling that the political context had a role to play in the lead up to the 2014 review.

There are several common criteria that are often used when determining whether an issue has crossed over into moral panic territory. The general definition of a moral panic is a prevalent fear or anxiety over a perceived threat to society and society's values. In the case of the History curriculum, we can link it to a perceived threat to Australian values. Moral panic is also a term used to describe the process that interested parties, such as politicians or the media, use to "attempt to incite" or generate anxiety (McRobbie & Thornton, 1995, 559).

Traditionally, the term "moral panic" has been used to describe fears surrounding crime; however, it is not exclusive to crime. Examples of previous topics for moral panics have included things like Native title, video games, comic books, drugs, and even teacher quality. Moral panics often involve "looking back to a 'golden age' where social stability and strong moral discipline acted as a deterrent to delinquency and disorder" (McRobbie & Thornton, 1995, 561) or in the case of

those potentially inciting moral panic over the History curriculum, a golden age where students were taught about the achievements of Western civilisation.

In practice, the concerns and anxieties expressed in the media over the *ACHistory* did not meet all of the seven steps of moral panic described by Crichton (2003) or the five characteristics outlined by Goode and Ben-Yehuda (2009). Nevertheless, we can probably go as far as to say that the elements of panic within the Liberal-National politicians and supporters did lead to the political response that was the Donnelly and Wiltshire 2014 review. Headlines such as “National curriculum gets our history badly wrong” (Berg, 2011); “How the West was lost: a lack of faith in civilisation” (Coorey, 2010); or “Blatant bias in national curriculum could damage our democracy” (Berg, 2012), all appeared prior to the 2014 review. These media commentators seem to have been highlighting a lack of faith in the objectiveness of the History curriculum. While it appeared at first that the culture wars that had raged during the Howard years were about to resume, the “cultural warriors” were left perplexed once the review was released.

The concern that there would be a negative effect on society due to the curriculum, seemed to vanish from news reporting quickly after the 2014 review’s release, meaning that the issue failed to develop into the final stages of a moral panic. Overall there appears to have been no general consensus that there was any group that was an overriding threat to national ideals or values. Further, while there was anxiety over the *ACHistory* amongst the conservative media and think tanks, labelling it a “panic” could be seen as an exaggeration. The 2014 review itself would not necessarily be considered a disproportionate response, although whether it was really necessary was obviously a topic for debate.

3.7.4 Culture Wars

The concern over the *ACHistory*, as already seen, did not fit exactly into any moral panics framework. Another feature to note, however, is the connection between culture wars and moral panics. The role of the media in providing counter-experts who can speak against the anxiety-inducing claims has meant in recent years that there is much less likely to be a consensus on any particular concern (Garland, 2008). While the media in its drive to sell stories may seem to be aiming to create a moral panic, their ability to provide a voice to those with counter claims can in fact stop concern gaining widespread acceptance. The media chooses to report on some events or stories, while ignoring others. This choice to report on certain topics reflects “news values” on what stories will sell (Cricher, 2003, 132). In this way the media plays a role in both moral panics and in culture wars, as they have some ability to set the agenda (Cricher, 2003).

The provision of counter-experts has meant there has been a shift away from traditional moral panics involving a consensus across all groups in society. Instead culture wars or competing concerns over a given cultural issue are more common, where social groups make use of moral politics in an attempt to “redistribute social status and declare one form of life superior to its rivals” (Garland, 2008, 17). Since culture wars generally involve a conflict between conservative and progressive values, history is regularly an area of such disputes. In Australia the culture wars over history have been coined the “history wars” (Macintyre & Clark, 2004). The history wars were directly related to the teaching of History in schools. The debate over the “black armband” view on history that calls for the acceptance of the wrongs that have occurred to indigenous peoples, and the “three

cheers” view which prefers to focus on Australia’s achievements and celebrate its successes. Debates over the supremacy of each view of history were particularly prominent during the Howard years and when the national museum in Canberra was built. These debates have also spilled over in part into school History curriculum (Taylor & Guyver, 2012).

The concern and comments from the right side of politics over the *ACHistory* culminating in the 2014 review, were understandably seen by some as the next round of the culture wars. As seen, they failed to result in the expected dispute. Instead, after the review was released, there were some minor grumbles before the issue seemed to have been generally forgotten.

3.8 Risk Society Theory

While it is probably reasonable to recognise that there was evidence for a degree of moral anxiety over the *ACHistory*, categorising it as a moral panic would not be accurate. Another angle of looking at the issue involves risk society theory and its connection to moral panic. Risk society theory is about the way our modern society organises itself as a result of risk and concerns about the future. A key author on risk society is sociologist Ulrich Beck. Beck (1992) defines risk society as “a systematic way of dealing with hazards and insecurities induced by modernisation itself” (Beck, 21). Another key author in the area, Anthony Giddens, also focused on the consequences of modernity in “a society...which unlike any preceding culture lives in the future rather than in the past” (Giddens & Pierson, 1998, 94). In his view, “A feature of modernity is that distant events and actions have a constant effect on our lives” (Giddens & Pierson, 1998, 98). The idea is that we as a society have become focused on risks, although we are not

always aware of it, as a result of changes in modern society, such as a loosening of the hold that traditions once had on society (Giddens & Pierson, 1998).

Risks are often viewed negatively, something to be avoided in case loss or disadvantage may occur. Many school programs “attempt to assess and manage negative risks to children and society” (Bialostok & Whitman, 2012, 2). Most literature on risk in education focuses on the way reforms are used to help “at-risk” children (Bialostok & Whitman, 2012, 16), but it can be further expanded to include concern over the quality of the curriculum. It has been noted that “many of the rightist policies now taking centre stage in education and nearly everything else embody a tension between a neo-liberal emphasis on ‘market values’” on the one hand and a neoconservative attachment to ‘traditional values’ on the other” (Apple, 2006, 21 in Kostogriz, 2006, 2). An attachment to traditional values was evident in much of the concern over the History curriculum and the possibility that these values are at risk.

3.8.1 Globalisation and the Connection to Risk Society

Globalisation has played a large role in the unsettling changes experienced in a modern society. The *ACHistory*, for instance, set out to have a world history view (National Curriculum Board, 2009). This focus on world history in Years 7 to 10 of the *ACHistory* demonstrates a focus that is shifting toward recognising Australia’s position as a nation in the world. Australia is faced with competitors economically. This competition has reached into education, with OECD results used to compare Australian students with their international peers (Topsfield, 2012). Due to the decline in Australia’s manufacturing industries the nation’s role in the world is evolving. In response, there has been rise in the level of

Commonwealth involvement in education with the introduction of NAPLAN, the MySchool website, and the Australian Curriculum.

The influence of the Commonwealth Government over the *ACHistory* in particular can be seen to have grown in recent years. The History curriculum, as already discussed, aroused much public debate and criticism from the introduction of the first framing paper. The reason for this was that the curriculum would essentially set out, as already noted, how the “story of Australia and the story of Australia in relation to the world” (Yates, 2012, 3) would be taught to younger generations in Australia. Which story would be told was considered a vitally important issue and has led to much debate between those holding differing views. The risk, as perceived by both sides, was that student would learn the “wrong” history of Australia.

The motivation recently for this Commonwealth involvement in curriculum decisions could be seen to be linked to an increasing view that schools are an economic tool in the sense that the training of young Australians for joining the workforce can lead to economic growth (Marginson, 1993). Welch (2010, 258-9) explains that this current “economic rationalism” is “based upon economic assumptions—that both the individual worth and the worth of education are ultimately measured in economic terms”. This places an economic value on individuals in the same way that an economic value is placed on various commodities. As such it is linked to the Commonwealth Government’s concern with building Australia’s economy on a global scale and a concern for the future. In this way business risk has become linked to education.

3.8.2 Risk and the History Curriculum

The risk associated with the *ACHistory* was seen to be that students would be left with a wrong or incomplete view of Australia's history and its place in the world. A further concern was that students might be left ashamed of their country and its past if their study of history were to focus too closely on the nation's past failings rather than its achievements. In other words, politicians and commentators, such as Christopher Pyne, were concerned that some of the nation's ideals were at risk if the *ACHistory* in its original form was retained. In an increasingly globalising world, anxiety about the future and Australia's place in the world can be seen to be increasing. With the consequent rise in neo-liberal ideals, concern over school curriculum can be seen as a reaction to modernity and Australia's place in the world (Rodwell, 2017b).

As Caplan (2000, 3), one UK anthropologist who specialised in risk theory, noted, "there is rarely expert agreement either on what constitutes acceptable risk, or on how it may be managed; as a result, public criticism and disquiet increase". This seems to be the case with the *ACHistory*. The original risk, as identified by John Howard, that students were at risk of being ignorant of Australia's history was met with the suggestion of a national curriculum. This was seen as a way of protecting the quality of curriculum and ensuring that left ideologies and post modernism were unable to "hijack" education (Kostogriz, 2006, 2). Once a curriculum had been written, however, the anxiety that it could be controlled by one side of politics arose. The announcement of the 2014 review was proposed as a means of managing that risk, allowing politician from the right to also have an influence over the curriculum.

This attempt at managing the risk prompted further disquiet from people who saw a new risk arising from this solution. Anxiety that the curriculum could change with each subsequent change of federal government and that the curriculum could become politicised was apparent (Burch, 2014), but subsided not long after the review was released. The concern over the *ACHistory* does demonstrate the highly political nature of both moral panics and culture wars, particularly since some educational decisions, such as the use of NAPLAN tests on the MySchool website, have now moved into the Commonwealth Government's jurisdiction due to tied funding arrangements (Keating & Klatt, 2012).

As Caplan argues, “understanding risk and danger is part of a way of making sense of the world, and keeping things in their proper place” (Caplan, 2000, 23). In this way the examination and anxiety over the potential risks posed by the curriculum are a way of society assessing the risk and to either accepting or rejecting them. Giddens states that “Risk and trust are closely bound up with one another. Trust- in a person, or in a system, such as a banking system- can be a means of coping with risk, while acceptance of risk can be a means of generating trust” (Giddens & Pierson, 1998, 101). Australians seem to have gained an element of trust in the review system, at least in this instance, and the cultural warriors who were prepared for the next round of the history wars have for the time stood down.

3.9 Summary

This chapter began by looking at the changes in state-Commonwealth responsibilities for schooling. Since Federation in 1901 where education was left

as a state power and responsibility, the Commonwealth Government has gradually increased its influence in this area, culminating in the role it took in the introduction of the Australian Curriculum.

An examination of the processes, issues and controversies surrounding the introduction of a national History curriculum in Australia included a consideration of whether the controversy surrounding the *ACHistory* had reached the stage of a moral panic or represented a culture war. Further, the controversy over the introduction of the curriculum and the subsequent 2014 review was considered in terms of risk theory. The next chapter will look at the methodology used in this project to gather and analyse data from school participants in three states and compare their views with those expressed in academic and media articles.

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

4.1 Aims of the Study

This research study set out to investigate the *Australian Curriculum: History (ACHistory)* in terms of its development, introduction and implementation, from the perspective of school stakeholders in three selected states. The researcher wished to find out how the three sets of teachers, parents and students, viewed their experiences of implementing the *ACHistory* in the classroom, as well as how similar or different their comments were from the views about the *ACHistory* published in the media or academic publications.

More specifically, it aimed to

- establish the various opinions held by the different school stakeholder groups in the three states on the purposes of history education;
- ascertain how far the various school stakeholders considered they had contributed to the process of developing the *ACHistory* in its content and structure, and how far they felt that its development had become politicised;
- investigate opinions of school stakeholders on the importance and value of the Australian history topics included in the *ACHistory* and the extent to which the new curriculum catered for diversity amongst students in the classrooms of the three states.

- identify differences and commonalities in the views of school stakeholders from the three states on the direction that the teaching of History should take in their schools.

4.1.1 Research Questions

As indicated in Chapter One and the discussion of aims above, this research project was intended to be exploratory in nature and investigate a range of views expressed by stakeholders within schools; by academics who were history education specialists; and by media reporters seeking to influence public opinion. The research questions were designed to reflect this exploratory aim and be appropriate for the form of inductive analysis that would achieve the intended aim.

The research questions on which this study was based were outlined in Chapter One under 1.3. They were designed to investigate:

1. the purposes of history education, as seen by school stakeholders in the three states, compared to those expressed in academic and media articles;
2. the views of school stakeholders on how far they had been able to contribute to the process of developing the *ACHistory* and to what extent they felt the process had become politicised and why;
3. the evaluation of school stakeholders on the Australian history topics in the *ACHistory* and the extent to which it was successful in catering for the diversity of student backgrounds and experiences;
4. the differences in attitude to the *ACHistory* among the school stakeholders in the three states and the factors that explain the modifications to the *ACHistory* introduced by the states in the implementation stage.

The first question concerns one of the key debates surrounding the *ACHistory* and its inclusion in the school curriculum. It examines what the teaching of History aims to achieve, in the views of school stakeholders, whether this is a feeling of national unity, the development of analytical skills, the gaining of necessary knowledge about the past or another purpose.

The second question arose due to the considerable commentary on the content of the *ACHistory* in both media and academic articles, with much of the criticisms suggesting a link to competing ideological views and Commonwealth and state power struggles. Largely missing from these commentaries were the views of school stakeholders, such as classroom teachers, and especially, students and parents.

The third question related to the teaching of specifically Australian history topics found in the Year 9 and 10 levels of the *ACHistory*. It was the content of these topics which caused the greatest controversy in the media and in academic publications. Linked to this was the issue of recognising the differences that existed among students in terms of educational achievements, cultural and linguistic backgrounds and family history. My interest in the diversity of student backgrounds came from my own background as a University of Adelaide graduate. The ideas of Professor Jerzy Smolicz were particularly influential for student-teachers going through the university, even after he had retired. Any University of Adelaide History graduate going through Diploma of Education at Adelaide between the mid1970s and early 2000s was exposed to ideas about multicultural education as it related to recognising and making use of the cultural

and linguistic backgrounds of students in classroom teaching through the teaching and writings of Professor Smolicz and his work with the Minister of Education's committee on multicultural education in developing appropriate school programs.

The fourth question sought to explore the extent and source of differences between the school stakeholder responses to the *ACHistory*. It was hoped that this might lead to an understanding of the modifications to the *ACHistory* that were introduced in each state during the implementation process.

Answering these research questions was not so much about verifying the facts about the introduction of the *ACHistory*, but interpreting the thoughts and feelings of those individuals from the three states investigated who had some personal experience of it in the schools. The qualitative approach to research was judged to be the most appropriate way of achieving this. Incorporated into this approach however, was the method of triangulation.

4.2 Qualitative Approaches to Research

According to Bogden and Biklen (2007, 2), “Qualitative research” is an “umbrella term” that encompasses multiple research strategies with similar characteristics, although not all of these are used in any given study. These characteristics include: naturalistic settings, descriptive data, concern with process, inductive analysis of data, and a focus on understanding the meaning and differing perspectives people give to their lives (Bogden & Biklen, 2007). It most often makes use of open-ended questions that allow participants to express their opinions on the topic being investigated. This study examined the way key school

stakeholders viewed the new *ACHistory* introduced into Australian schools and how this influenced their learning experiences and their valuation of the subject. A qualitative approach was also very appropriate for the collection and analysis of potentially varying perspectives on the history curriculum.

As Patton (2002, 76) noted, “Qualitative inquiry is not a single, monolithic approach to research and evaluation”; rather it incorporates a multitude of approaches within the one term. Denzin and Lincoln (2003, 3-4) further noted that, qualitative research “crosscuts disciplines, fields, and subject matter”. They went on to define qualitative research as

a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible... This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them.

(Denzin and Lincoln, 2003, 4-5)

Flick (2002, 4) listed the essential features of qualitative research as

the correct choice of appropriate methods and theories; the recognition and analysis of different perspectives; the researchers’ reflection on their research as part of the process of knowledge production; and the variety of approaches and methods.

Qualitative research mainly develops its findings from the analysis of three types of data: open-ended interviews, direct observation, and finally written documents (Patton, 2002). This study made use of two of these types of data - interviews and written documents. The researcher collected answers to “direct quotations from people about their experiences, opinions, feelings and knowledge” (Patton, 2002, 5) related to the new history curriculum, and the relevance and suitability of the *ACHistory*. The interview analysis was triangulated with published academic

articles and newspaper reports on the *ACHistory*, which had been published over the period that this research was taking place.

For this study, the main attraction of qualitative research approach was that it had proved a good way to “hear silenced voices” (Creswell, 2007, 40). The adoption of a qualitative approach enabled school stakeholder groups to give voice to and express their opinions in a way that would not have been possible through the use of surveys and questionnaires. As Creswell (2007, 40) explained the qualitative method of talking to participants enables the researcher to gain a “detailed understanding of the issue...this detail can only be established by talking directly with people, going to their homes or places of work, and allowing them to tell the stories unencumbered by what we expect to find or what we have read in the literature”. Through using a qualitative approach, the voices of those whose perspectives were sought in this study were more clearly heard.

4.3 The Method of Triangulation

The method of triangulation was adopted as an important way of achieving the aims of the research study. Triangulation is a term borrowed from naval navigation and is often used to ensure the greater validity of the findings. As in navigation, multiple reference points are used to position a phenomenon (Creswell, 2012, 536), so in investigating complex phenomena, “corroborating evidence from different individuals..., types of data..., or methods of data collection” (Creswell, 2012, 259) are used to find the point of convergence of these different types of data on the same phenomenon (Creswell, 2012, 536). Bogden and Biklen (1998, 104) explained the use of triangulation in research more directly: “to establish a fact you need more than one source of information”.

For instance, to determine a person's identity authorities generally require more than one form of identification, such as a birth certificate, passport or driver's licence. In the same way different types of data, such as interviews and focus group discussions, media articles, academic articles in this study, can be used for the "verification of the facts" (Bogden & Biklen, 1998, 104).

In qualitative research, however, triangulation can be used in a rather different way by enabling "the combination of different interpretations of different types of data. The result is a more correct representation of what is going on in the area in question" (Gibson, 2007, 443). In this project triangulation was used to achieve this sort of understanding. Through positioning the data collected through interviews and focus group discussions with key educational stakeholders against the views portrayed in media articles and peer-reviewed academic journal articles, it was possible to identify any differences between the groups concerned. This form of triangulation was selected to determine if views on the *ACHistory* were isolated to one or two groups in Australian society or were more widespread, and in particular, to find evidence of the extent of state differences. The three sources of data used for the triangulation are discussed below.

4.3.1 Media Articles

Media articles provided a glimpse into the various public discourses and views on the development and implementation of the *ACHistory*, potentially from a range of political standpoints. The media "can have a powerful effect on policy formation if only because such recurrent, scathing and agenda-setting campaigns resonate in ministerial offices and in the corridors of bureaucracy" (Taylor & Collins, 2012a, 532). As a result, media articles found in newspapers and other

forums were a significant source of public opinions which could act as an intermediary between the views of the public and the policy formation of government on matters such as the *ACHistory*. Furthermore, although media articles need the editor's approval, unlike academic publications, they are not peer-reviewed. Consequently, media articles are not subject "to testing about whether they have been fair to the available evidence" (Yates et al. 2011, 321). As a result, media articles, including editorials and opinion pieces, are able to advocate potentially biased or more extreme views than those presented through a peer-reviewed academic forum.

Sources such as newspaper articles, or the online articles found on *The Conversation* did pose some problems for the researcher. Such articles were not peer-reviewed, and so did not necessarily hold to the same standards that are expected of peer-reviewed articles (Paltridge, 2017). They did, however, provide important insights into the opinions which were circulating in the public domain, in the case of this study, to the *ACHistory*, from the time of its release until the present.

Newspaper articles and articles found on *The Conversation* possess both strengths and weaknesses when used as a source for research. These articles provided evidence of popular concerns about the *ACHistory* and the form they took; however, they could not be taken necessarily as a source of accurate information regarding events or decisions made about the curriculum. As Galgano, Arndt and Hyser (2008, 72) pointed out,

Although these sources provide a popular view into a time period, the fact that newspapers often report on events based

on the evidence a reporter has collected gives newspapers and magazines some of the characteristics of a secondary source.

The potential bias and the lack of reliable primary evidence in newspaper articles pointed to the need for triangulation against other sources, such as peer-reviewed academic articles. Peer-reviewed articles, in contrast to newspapers, are expected to be based on primary sources and reviewed by experts who “are well regarded in the field and who have published on the topic of the research” (Paltridge, 2017, 22).

There is a fundamental difference, however, between newspaper articles and those from *The Conversation*, which it is important to recognise. Articles on *The Conversation* have been written by specially selected individuals, often academics, who were regarded as experts in the area under discussion. This meant that their comments share something of the greater knowledge and authority that peer-reviewed articles written by academics are usually accorded, despite the fact that *The Conversation* articles have not been subject to peer-review.

While many historians would understandably have real reservations with using newspaper and *The Conversation* articles as a source of reliable facts, they have been used extensively in this thesis as one of the few available sources of public opinion surrounding the *ACHistory*. In addition, the opinions expressed were triangulated against the views of the interview participants, as well as peer-reviewed journal articles.

In the course of the analysis presented in the following chapters, reference is made to fifty-seven media articles which appeared over the years this research was

taking place (2014 to 2018) on some aspect of the *ACHistory*. They come from the following media publications: *The Australian*, *The Advertiser*, *The West Australian*, *The Courier Mail*, *Inside Story*, *The Conversation*, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, *News Weekly*, *ABC News*, *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Guardian* and *News.com*. A full list of authors, sources, article titles and years is given in Table 1: Triangulation Data I which appears in Appendix C.

The media articles used as triangulation data came from 15 different sources. The six sources from which most articles were drawn were: *The Conversation*, twenty articles; *The Sydney Morning Herald*, eight articles; *The Australian*, six articles; *ABC News* five articles; *News.com.au* three articles; *The Guardian*, two articles; *The Advertiser*, two articles. The remaining eight sources were represented by only one article.

It is also worth noting the dates when these articles appeared. Out of the total of 57, as many as 33 appeared in 2014, the year the review of the Australian Curriculum was announced and subsequently released. Only nine appeared in 2015, none in 2016, nine in 2017 and six in 2018.

4.3.2 Peer-reviewed Academic Articles

Peer-reviewed journal articles were also examined as a part of the triangulation process in order to provide an insight into the educational views and opinions of history and education academics. The target audience of peer-reviewed journals does not usually correspond with readers of newspaper and other media articles. As a result, the information presented in academic articles is displayed in a different format. In contrast to media articles, those that appear in academic

journals undergo a peer-review process that ensures that the article's content, presentation of the research approach and findings have been founded on previous research in the discipline. Moreover, it is expected to be logically argued in the format traditionally accepted in the discipline. Due to the peer-review process and the established academic expectations, the opinions expressed in academic journal articles are supported by evidence such as data.

Because peer-reviewed articles are presented to a specialist audience, they are considered theoretically to be less subjective. However, publication bias can be a factor, meaning that ideological beliefs, such as political convictions or different models of research, can potentially influence how articles are written and presented (Torgerson, 2006). The analysis in published journal articles allows for questions which explore their purpose and why they have been published. Such articles were used in triangulation with newspaper articles to develop an understanding of differences and similarities evident between popular opinion and the views of those in the academic education, and particularly history education, field.

In all, twenty-one peer-reviewed academic articles were used in the analysis chapters. They appeared in the following journals *Curriculum Perspectives*, *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, *Policy*, *Institute of Public Affairs Review*, *Journal of Comparative Policy Analysis*, *Australian Policy and History*, *The Curriculum Journal*, *Agora*, *Education Policy*, *International Education Journal*, *Issues in Educational Research*, and *Education Research & Perspectives*. A full list of authors, article titles, publication sources and years of publication is

given in Table 2: Triangulation Data II which appears in Appendix C. The 21 articles were published in a total of 13 different journals, with six appearing in the journal, *Curriculum Perspectives* and two in *Agora*. In terms of year of publication, five appeared in 2014; nine in 2015; four in 2016; and two in 2017.

4.3.3 Interview Data from School Stakeholders

The third point of the triangulation was the interview data gathered from the school stakeholders: the students, the parents, the teachers and History Teachers' Association members in the three states, South Australia, Western Australia and Victoria. The method selected to gather and analyse these data in this research was shaped by the research questions. Initially, the project sought to examine the opinions of students as a school stakeholder group that was rarely heard from in regards to the issues associated with the *ACHistory*. The opinion of the student group, in particular, was not known, and the perspectives of the other two school stakeholder groups were generally represented collectively through professional associations and groups. For instance, Ditchburn (2015, 27-28) noted that "students are excluded from curriculum development" which resulted in "the exclusion of students' voices". As a result, the decision was made to use a methodology that would allow for their voices to be heard, as far as possible, on their own terms. Details of how the interviews were carried out are given in the next section.

4.4 Data Collection through Interviews

Methods of data collection included individual twenty-minute interviews with parents and teachers, and thirty-minute focus group discussions with groups of three to five students in Years 9 and 10. While History under the Australian Curriculum was initially compulsory for students from Foundation to Year 10, students in primary school, particularly those in junior primary were unlikely to be able to respond to the sorts of questions the researcher was interested in.

Interviews using open-ended questions were chosen as the best approach to collect data from parents and teachers. This approach allowed for participants to discuss their perspectives without being constrained by the questions asked. The case for this was well put by Charmaz (2014, 65) who stated that “by creating open-ended, non-judgemental questions, you encourage unanticipated statements and stories to emerge”. For the students, it was decided that a focus group discussion was the best format, to enable students to feel more at ease and to allow them to bounce ideas off each other. One concern with using focus groups was the potential for one or two students to dominate the discussion. In the format of group interviews, there can “be problems associated with group culture and dynamics, and in achieving balance in the group interactions” (Punch, 2009, 147). One strategy for dealing with this was to ensure that some questions were directed towards quieter students to provide them with the opportunity to speak (if they wished to) before others in the group provided their opinions.

As the research was intended only as an exploratory probe into what school stakeholders thought about the implementation of the new *ACHistory* in Australian schools, the overall number of discussions conducted was limited to

approximately thirty interviews. Data were intended to be used to infuse a layer of primary sources through the line of argument.

4.4.1 Ethics Approval

Ethics approval to conduct this research was sought from the University of Adelaide Human Research Ethics Committee. The project was given the Ethics Approval number H-2015-142 (See Appendix A). Permission to conduct research in schools was granted by each state-based Education Department and Catholic Education Office, and following this, approval from school principals and consent from participants themselves was required (See Appendix B).

Participation was through the nomination of the school principal whose school was approached after recommendations were requested from the relevant History Teachers' Association in each state. Parents involved in the research were those whose child attended a school that had agreed to participate. Parents were invited to participate through their child's school. Teachers were those who were currently teaching using the *ACHistory* in the school. There were no specific exclusion criteria, but only those who were in the school context described above were invited to take part. Due to the means of contacting schools through the suggestion of History Teachers' Associations, it was deemed likely that teacher respondents would be those who were more involved in the development of their own skills in teaching this subject and more interested in the direction in which the *ACHistory* was likely to develop.

4.4.2 Site Selection

The Australian Curriculum was implemented throughout Australian states and territories. However, while this was an issue that was relevant in multiple states and territories, it was not feasible due to time constraints to collect data from each one. For this study, three states were selected as this allowed for tapping into a range of views, based on different state contexts. This was seen to be an important issue given that the state-federal relations were an important factor in the new national Australian Curriculum.

The three states selected were South Australia, Western Australia and Victoria. In addition to the reasons mentioned in Chapter One, Western Australia was chosen due to its history of being a reluctant partner in Federation. This reluctance was illustrated through Western Australia's history which included an initial hesitation in joining Federation (Sabhlok, 2012-13) and subsequent movements rallying for secession from the Federation (Miragliotta, 2013). This history is relevant when looking at the educational change that has come about in terms of national curriculum development as opposed to state-based development. Victoria was selected due to its previous discrete History curriculum, introduced in 2005, which was in contrast to other states that taught History as part of SOSE, as well as their original incorporation of the *ACHistory* into their own state curriculum known as AusVELS (VCAA, n.d.a). South Australia was selected, both because it was my home state and because it demonstrated a transition from History taught through SOSE to History taught as a discrete subject under the initial version of the *ACHistory*. Moreover, South Australia, unlike the other two states involved, continued to include Year 7 as part of its primary school system.

While schools in each state from the three schooling systems (Catholic, Independent, state) were approached to participate, only a limited number of schools from each system were able to be included per state. In Victoria only one school in the state elected to participate. While initially the intention was to include one school from each system in the three states selected for this study, at the suggestion of a staff member at the Education Department in South Australia, additional South Australian state schools were included. This proved to be a fortunate addition, due to the difficulties involved in finding Victorian schools willing to participate. Predominantly, the schools who participated in this study provided a view from key educational stakeholders based in metropolitan areas, however, three country schools were included.

4.4.3 Interview Participants

The key school stakeholder groups identified in this research were members of History Teachers' Associations, teachers, parents and students. Participants across these groups thus included both adults and minors. While these were not the only stakeholders involved in the Australian History Curriculum, these four school based groups were either working directly with the curriculum (such as teachers and students) or represented those most directly affected by the decisions made, the students and their parents, whose opinions were rarely, if at all, heard in public discussions on the *ACHistory*. Overall, seven individual interviews were conducted with parents, three with History Teachers' Association members, and nine with teachers. Participants came from Catholic, Independent, and state-run schools. A list of the participants in all school stakeholder groups is given in Table 1, which is included in Appendix F.

The individual interviews for parent and teacher participants were designed to be brief to minimise the inconvenience to participants and to ensure that the amount of data did not become too overwhelming. In practice, they were kept to approximately twenty minutes each to satisfy these needs. Interviews followed a set of open-ended questions that prompted participants to discuss their perceptions of the *ACHistory* and the way it was being implemented in schools. Sets of open-ended questions were specific to the type of participant being interviewed: History Teachers' Association members, teachers, parents, or students. Copies of these sets of interview questions are included in Appendix D.

The student focus group discussions were kept to approximately thirty minutes for the same reasons as the individual interviews, but were slightly longer to allow students time to settle before the discussions began. Focus groups with three to five students in each were used to collect students' opinions on open-ended questions. Nine student focus group discussions were held, at least one in each of the three selected states (Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia). A copy of the questions used with the focus groups is included in Appendix D.

The interview and focus group responses were analysed to find out the extent of commonality or difference between the stakeholders' interview responses and the perspectives illustrated in media and academic articles related to the development, introduction and implementation of the *ACHistory* and the involvement of the Commonwealth Government. The method of analysis used for identifying key themes in the interview data is discussed in section 4.5.

4.4.4 Limitations of the Research Design

The design of this study led inevitably to some limitations that need to be recognised. One relates to the fact that it was intended to be a small scale exploratory study that investigated the views of a limited number of participants about their experiences of History teaching and learning in their particular schools. The findings therefore cannot be generalized beyond these settings. Another limitation relates to the fact that the views of the school stakeholders were sought in only three states, whereas the Australian Curriculum is “national”. As a result, the views of school stakeholders in the remaining states and territories have not been taken into account in this study. Moreover, the study focussed on the views of participants from the four stakeholder groups that are directly associated with schools. A number of other groups, such as school principals, academics, teacher unions and even employers, could have been consulted or had already provided their views on the issues raised in the questions. Individuals, such as politicians, at both federal and state level, had already voiced alternative perspectives.

A judgement was also made to concentrate on the depth rather than the breadth of data gathered. Interviews and focus group sessions were limited to approximately 20 and 30 minutes respectively. While for some student focus groups, 30 minutes was more than enough time, several interviews with adult participants could and did take more time. More information could potentially have been gathered, if these interviews had been extended.

4.5 Grounded Theory and Methods of Qualitative Analysis

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2003, 5), “Qualitative researchers deploy a wide range of interconnected interpretive practices, hoping always to get a better understanding of the subject matter at hand”. This study incorporated inductive analysis practices used in the grounded theory approach to analysing qualitative data. The methods of qualitative analysis used in grounded theory focus on interpreting data collected from interviews, documents and observation, with the long term aim of developing a conceptual framework or theory about “how individuals interact with the phenomena under study” (Urquhart, 2013, 5). Grounded theory was regarded as the most appropriate form of analysis for this research which was intended as a probe into a current issue about which little was known. In this study it was the opinions of school stakeholders in South Australia, Western Australia and Victoria, which for the most part were unknown.

However, there is not one single grounded theory, but a range of different methods linked to particular ideological perspectives. A critical grounded theory method was utilized for this study because the hope was that it would result in the generation of “meaningful understandings and explanations of human interaction in the social world” (Kushner & Morrow, 2003, 37), such as that between teachers and students in the History classroom. In so far as the research is also looking at federal-state relations in regard to the introduction of a national History curriculum for the whole of Australia, it has a critical dimension in that it “exposes the assumptions of existing research orientations, critiques the knowledge base, and through these critiques reveals ideological effects on teachers, schools and the culture’s views in education” (Cresswell, 2007, 27). At their base, such assumptions are usually related to issues of who holds power.

Through this form of analysis, it was possible to gain an understanding of how the various school stakeholders in this study felt about how the recent changes to the history curriculum affected them. Data were collected from a diverse range of school stakeholders, covering the three different states and schools in a range of socio-economic areas and with differing political affiliations.

Grounded theory was developed in 1967 by Glaser and Strauss, originally as a method for sociologists to use, but its application has since expanded so that it is often used in education (Cresswell, 2012). Glaser and Strauss (1967, 1) described the approach as the “discovery of theory from data”. Researchers create categories from the data they have gathered rather than attempting to locate data that fits into existing pre-conceived categories. Grounded theory has been explained more fully as a research approach that “focuses on gathering data about people’s experiences in a particular context and then inductively building a theory ‘from the bottom up’” (Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen & Walker, 2014, 493). Heath and Cowley (2004, 142) considered that “grounded theory’s aim is to explore basic social processes *and* to understand variation in that process”, as this research set out to do through the analysis of data across different school sectors and states.

4.5.1 Different Methods of Grounded Theory Analysis

While it is true that “all research is grounded in data in some way” (Glaser, 1998, 836), grounded theory offers researchers more than one method of analysis, each linked to specific research objectives, to achieve this grounding. In recent years there has been greater recognition of these divergent approaches, to the point where Cooke (2014, 6) argued that grounded theory had become a blanket term for qualitative research methods, in which “the researcher is simply proposing a

theory that reflects the experiences and interactions of the participants”. However, the steps outlined in each of the grounded theory methods are intended to enable the researcher to look for theories through identifying variations and patterns within the collected data.

Some methods of grounded theory analysis have links to quantitative research, where the concern is to use thematic coding to demonstrate the validity and reliability of not only the data, but also the results at each stage of the analysis. The systematic process of thematic coding involves a number of stages in reducing the data until their “underlying uniformities and properties are discovered” (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007, 494). The researcher can then go on to formulate the sort of “multivariate conceptual theory” envisaged by Glaser (1998, 836).

Other methods of grounded theory analysis are linked to interpretative approaches in qualitative research where the basic data are words, in one form or another. As these words are used by various participants, they often acquire multilayered meanings, the understanding of which is important for interpreting the participants’ thoughts, feelings and actions (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). The process of deconstructing such data through thematic coding has been described as “disassembling and re-assembling the data” (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007, 492) in order to get to the essence of the common meaning or core, what might be described as the lowest common denominator. Such analysis defeats the whole purpose of much qualitative research, where the concern is to understand and take account of the varying meanings and perspectives expressed by different individuals and groups. What is not identified in the thematic coding

process are the lived thoughts, feelings and actions of the participants, in their particular circumstances. In other words, the distinctive voices of the participants are lost.

Where a researcher has gathered data in word form through interviews or the writing of personal statements, a more appropriate method of grounded theory analysis is the constructivist approach developed by Charmaz (2006), as described by Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen and Walker (2014). Her analysis of such data takes account of “diverse local worlds and multiple realities and recognizes that the theory developed depends on the researcher’s view”. In addition, she seeks to use the analysis to make “visible hierarchies of power, communication and opportunity” (Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen and Walker, 2014, 494). Charmaz’s way of doing grounded theory analysis involves close reading and re-reading of the data and making memos or notes, comparing the similarities and variations evident in the data. These notes build up to establishing “analytic categories” and recognizing ways in which these can be potentially linked into a theory (Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen and Walker, 2014, 494).

In making a decision about which method of grounded theory to follow, a researcher also needs to be aware of the difficulties associated with using grounded theory in the analysis of qualitative data. These issues are considered in the section that follows.

4.5.2 Challenges in Using Grounded Theory

A number of researchers have pointed to the challenges of using a grounded theory method for analysing qualitative data. The most important ones that

needed to be taken into account in this study were the place of prior knowledge; the related issue of when the review of existing literature on the topic needs to be carried out; and, most fundamentally, the extent to which grounded theory analysis can actually generate theory.

One of the dilemmas associated with the practice of grounded theory relates to how familiar researchers should be with the proposed topic before they begin using a method which places the emphasis on the generation of theory from the data gathered (Backman & Kyngäs, 1999). If the aim of grounded theory is to allow themes to emerge from the data rather than from a review of the literature (Punch, 2009), researchers need to consciously strive to prevent any earlier views from seeping into the analysis of the data (Backman & Kyngäs, 1999). This issue is sometimes referred to as the problem of prior knowledge, where the problem lies in the potential for the researchers' prior knowledge of existing theories or studies to influence their interpretation of their data (Pratt, 2012). This would mean that the theory developed as a result of the data analysis would not necessarily be grounded entirely in the data.

Some scholars, however, have argued that it is difficult, if not impossible for researchers to set aside their prior knowledge. As Flick (2002) noted, it is generally regarded as inevitable that the interpretation of data is in some way influenced by the social and cultural background of the researcher. Moreover, it is difficult for a researcher to go into a new study without any pre-conceived idea or knowledge about the topic, for researchers would then be unable "to conduct studies in their own area of expertise" (Thornburg, 2012, 244).

The timing of the literature review is a particular example of the wider issue of prior knowledge. Some researchers have recommended that the literature review of past studies should be delayed until late in the analysis process to minimize the direct influence of earlier theories and research findings on the primary data interpretation (Punch, 2009; Waring, 2012). In the present study, contemporary writings related to the research topic were used as complementary data which were triangulated with the interviews. This could be seen as comparable to the approach used in some grounded theory methods, where the “literature is seen as further data to be fed into the analysis, but at a stage in the data analysis when theoretical directions have become clear” (Punch, 2009, 134).

A different opinion on the timing of the literature review was put by Thornburg (2012, 244), who pointed to the risk involved in not completing any literature review until the analysis was nearing completion; “what may seem like a key break through to the researcher[s] may in fact be a reflection of their own ignorance of the literature”. Instead, Thornburg (2012, 249) argued for the adoption of what he termed “informed grounded theory”, where researchers became familiar with “existing research literature and theoretical frameworks” early in the process. This approach would allow researchers to make use of pre-existing research, while still ensuring that their analysis was grounded in the new data collected.

Much of the criticism of grounded theory methods of analysis appears to be based on the assumption that the outcome of the analysis should be a well-developed theory that has widespread application. This may be achievable in quantitative research, but the very aims of qualitative research are usually much more limited,

even when the researchers choose to use Charmaz's constructivist method of grounded theory, as the most useful way of analysing the data they have collected. Small scale qualitative studies are much more likely to produce theoretical insights that are specific only to the group of participants involved. As such, they may generate follow-up studies that involve different sets of participants, to discover whether similar findings are upheld or not. Although any theoretical insights derived from a small set of qualitative data cannot be generalised to other sets of respondents, they may prove useful to researchers interpreting the comments of another group of respondents. Additionally, the findings from small scale qualitative studies may be used as a base for large scale quantitative surveys designed to investigate their validity for a whole population. A different approach is to use the results of a small scale qualitative investigation to understand what the statistical results generated by a large quantitative study mean in the lives of individual participants (Marjoribanks, 2002).

4.5.3 The Benefits of Grounded Theory Analysis for this Study

Because the grounded theory approach to analysis is intended to generate theory, Creswell (2007, 66) argued that "grounded theory is a good design to use when a theory is not available to explain a process", or when current theories do not fit the specific problem, phenomenon or participants being studied (Creswell, 2012). Urquhart (2013, 10) also considered that grounded theory was useful "where no theory exists, so for new phenomena it's an ideal choice". Theoretically, the assumption is that "the GT researcher does not know in advance what will be found" (Glaser & Holton, 2007, 54). This means that researchers can commence collecting data without any pre-conceived ideas about what evidence the data will reveal. In practice, this was the case with this research. For the interview

component in this study, grounded theory method was most appropriate as the likely responses of the school stakeholders were currently unknown. Due to this, it was pertinent to collect data through interviews about participants' views on the *ACHistory* near the beginning of the research project to ensure that any emerging theory would be grounded in the data.

Another advantage arises from the fact that as “grounded theory is a general method, it can be used on any data or combination of data” (Glaser, 1998, 842). Since grounded theory “is also said to be good for understanding processes” (Urquhart, 2013, 10), it can be applied to the exploration of processes surrounding the development, reception and implementation of the *ACHistory*. The appeal of using Charmaz’s constructivist grounded theory analysis for this project centred around the use of interviews with open-ended questions to gather the views and perspectives of participants, with the focus of analysis on understanding what participants felt about the phenomenon of the introduction of a national History curriculum, in order to develop theoretical understandings about this phenomenon which took account of their context.

A further benefit of Charmaz’s approach was her recognition that “grounded theory can aid researchers in explicating their participants’ implicit meanings and actions” to a wider audience (Charmaz, 2011, 361-2). In this study, the data collected through interviews and focus group discussion were analysed according to Charmaz’s constructionist grounded theory approach and subsequently presented verbatim in the analysis discussion chapters. According to Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen and Walker (2014, 533), evidence of the validity of data analysis can be based on what is called “interpretative adequacy”, that is the researcher’s accurate

portrayal of “the meaning attached by participants to what is being studied by the researcher”. Johnson and Christensen (2000, 209) have explained this as the “degree to which the participants’ viewpoints, thoughts, feelings, intentions and experiences are accurately understood ...and portrayed” (Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen and Walker, 2014, 533). Using verbatim quotations, the actual words spoken or written by the participants, helps the reader to understand directly the experiences of the participants in their world, without any intervening interpretation by the researcher.

4.6 Summary

In relation to the present study, the grounded theory approach was adopted for the analysis of the interview and focus group data. Charmaz’s method of constructivist analysis was used to find out the extent of commonality and difference in the thoughts and feelings among the various school stakeholders about the new national *ACHistory*. The themes that emerged represented the views of a range of school-based individuals who had personal experience of actually teaching and learning the new curriculum. Perspectives on the *ACHistory* expressed in the media, as well as in articles and books written by academics about the development, introduction and implementation of the *ACHistory*, were then included in the scope of the data for comparison with the school stakeholders’ views. Rather than testing the theoretical insights from the interview and focus group data, the researcher intended to juxtapose them with the perspectives of the other two sets of data and discover the extent of convergence or divergence. The results of this two stage analysis are presented in the chapters which follow.

CHAPTER FIVE

PARTICIPANT VIEWS ON THE PURPOSE OF HISTORY

5.1 Introduction: A National Conversation?

As discussed in Chapter Two, there are multiple purposes behind the teaching of History in Australian schools. The value of teaching History is weighted differently depending on which purpose or purposes is given precedence. Which purpose or purposes is set forward as the most vital also determines what aspects of the curriculum are considered most important, whether this is the skills that are developed through History or particular content. The rationale listed in the Overview of the *Australian Curriculum: History (ACHistory)* lists several purposes for the teaching of history, such as the development of transferrable skills, “to equip students for the world (local, regional, global) in which they live”, to promote understanding and appreciation of the world, and to develop “informed and active participation in Australia’s diverse society” (ACARA, 2015).

While the *ACHistory* does state some purposes for History education, perhaps more discussion could still be had. There is currently a lack of uniformity in History curricula amongst the states, with each state responsible for the implementation of the Australian Curriculum which has allowed for different interpretations. With the shift in Victoria from AusVELS to the Victorian Curriculum and the implementation in Western Australia of the Western

Australian Curriculum the differences between states seems once again to be increasing. One member of a History Teachers' Association explained their personal feelings on the issue and that they felt a national conversation was required in order to achieve a national History curriculum.

To get a national History curriculum you actually have to talk about History. You have to come together first and talk about how people feel History should be taught in schools and how and what it should be made up of.

Now, that discussion was not had prior to the curriculum being started. There's a whole lot of important and fundamental questions that could have been considered before anyone put pen to paper and that will be ongoing, that hasn't been resolved.

So, the benefit of having a national curriculum would be that you would actually sit down and have that discussion productively if you could get people to answer it in the right spirit rather than start another history war all over again. But there are those History content and curriculum issues that it could be discussed and then the benefits of a national curriculum are huge for the small states in resourcing and so on. (HTAA)

A national conversation on the purposes behind History teaching may lead to a more unified direction for teaching History in Australia. While the Overview of the *ACHistory* makes it evident that some thought has gone into the purpose of teaching History, a consensus or at least a conversation between the states and territories and different stakeholder groups, while difficult to achieve, may lead to a more national *ACHistory*.

This chapter examines the purposes that the participants in this study attributed to the importance of studying History in school. Participants were not asked any specific questions about what they thought was the purpose for teaching History

in Australian schools, however, it emerged as a theme during the analysis of interview and focus group data.

5.2 National Identification and Pride

National identification was one rationale that was included in Chapter Two for the inclusion of History as a school subject. Responses that suggested this as a purpose for History in schools were most often prompted by questions about the amount or importance of Australian history in the curriculum. All participants stated that it was important for school students to study Australian history, at least to some extent, suggesting that national identification was one purpose for History.

That students did feel some sense of national identification seems somewhat apparent in their assertions that they should learn about Australia's past as that was where they lived.

C: What's your opinion about the amount of Australian history you learn about in school?

S2: I wish it was a little less, but I guess you need to know it.

C: Why do you think you need to know it?

S3: Because we live in Australia. That's the main reason. (WA3)

This opinion that, while they did not always enjoy it, they should learn about Australia, at least to an extent, was prevalent among most groups of students, parents, and teachers. This suggested that they did see the importance of learning about Australian history.

One parent (SA3P1) used the example of students in the USA to illustrate the enthusiasm for national history they felt Australian students should also share.

I think it's really important that Australian history is encouraged because, I mean, we've just recently travelled to America and over there the kids are all geared for their American history, and they know all their American history inside out and back to front and are really proud of their country... (SA3P1)

The promotion of national pride or patriotism was viewed by this parent as one purpose for History. This was a step further than the views expressed by the other participants, who did not explicitly state that national pride was a reason that studying Australian history was important.

However, while the promotion of national identification and unity was one purpose assigned to History, among some students an identification with their state history over national history seemed to be apparent. One group of students in South Australia explained that they felt that they should not have to learn about some topics in as great a detail as students from other states because it was "their history" and not the students' own.

C: Do you think you should learn the same things as kids in, say, Victoria?

S2: No.

S3: Not all of it, because we still should learn a little bit about Gold rush and settlement, but not as much as they should learn, because they live there and that's their history. (SA5)

This assertion seems to demonstrate that these particular students identified more strongly with their home state, South Australia in this instance, than they did with national history or history that centred around a different location in Australia. Whether or not an identification with state over national history was viewed as a problem seemed to depend on the views participants held on the state government system and the accompanying separation of state and federal responsibilities.

One parent held strong views on the differences in education between the states. “Why can’t there be uniformity throughout the states? No one is ever able to answer that question...Why do they do it this way, do they actually think it’s working?” (WA1P). This participant’s displeasure with the differences in state education systems was apparent throughout the interview. Another parent held a similar view:

I think they should all combine together and work together to be honest. I’m not keen on this state decides this and federal does this. I think they all need to combine together. (SA3P1)

While the comments of the first parent were directed predominately towards the separate state education systems, comments like these illustrated a Federalist view that preferenced an increase in national unity and uniformity.

In contrast to the first group of students (SA5) who did not feel national uniformity was important, students at two other schools, one in Western Australia (WA3), the other in South Australia, believed that it was important that all students across Australia learned the same history because “it sets up common knowledge for when you leave school. Everyone is on the same page” (SA3). This particular opinion ties into the view that it is important for each student to leave school with a shared view of Australia’s past and role in world history. It is connected to the view that to achieve national identification there should be one national narrative.

5.3 Developing Informed Citizens: “Science is useful, but history is important”

One key rationale for teaching History that was raised by parents, students, and teachers alike in three different school settings (SA3T, SA3, SA3P3, SA5, WA3) was the need to prepare students to participate in Australia’s democratic system by helping them to become informed voters and citizens.

Developing informed citizens was an explicit purpose behind the teaching of History at one school in this study and the importance of History was explained to students as such (SA3). When asked if he believed History should be compulsory, this teacher replied “I do. I think it depends really what you’re thinking in terms of History” (SA3T). He further explained that he was not suggesting that History should be compulsory for Years 11 and 12, but that for Year 10 he felt it was important. He expanded this by explaining the purpose he saw for teaching History.

...in terms of a student understanding our society and being placed in a position where they understand how it works, how you change it, and their role in that change for when they go vote, is critically important. So that’s how we see it. So, what we teach the Year 10 course in particular is absolutely aimed at everyone, because they will all vote. We make that absolutely clear to them. We use a line that’s ‘subjects like maths and science are useful. History is important’ just to make that point. (SA3T)

This teacher further emphasised his belief in the importance of a national curriculum in particular

If you’d like to have a student body that becomes a body politic that votes and understand it, it’s very important. You have to have a national perspective. (SA 3T).

This belief behind the purpose of History teaching, that it was important for developing informed citizens, was also reflected in parent and student responses at

the same school, suggesting that the school context may have played a large role in shaping this view (SA3). One student stated that

S3: I also think the way we learn History really effects our culture and the way we reflect back on what's happened previously, and I think that by all of Australia learning the same History content, I think that will kind of help with politics and future careers and integrating the different states together and stuff like that (SA3).

This comment highlighted several purposes for History in schools that this particular student believed were important, which are discussed later in this chapter. This student did, however, highlight politics are one reason why they believed studying History was important. This was further emphasised later in the discussion when students in this focus group explained that they found the topics they studied in Year 10 more “useful” than the topics they studied in earlier years.

S1: Yeah, I suppose it [History] becomes more useful history the higher the grade, because like when we were in Year 7, Year 8 it was more way back in the past, like medieval times and ancient times, but this year and next year it's more about governments, law and politics.

S3: It seems more beneficial for our learning. It seems like we can use lessons learnt then, like, today. (SA3)

These students seemed to see a value to learning about the political history and systems of government established in Australia and this was potentially linked back to their teacher's (SA3T) view that one of the prominent aims of History was to develop informed citizens who would go on to vote in elections. Likewise, one parent at this school stated that through studying History students were able to learn “why we are here today with the political system that we have” (SA3P3), showing that this was a topic that this parent felt was useful for students to understand. These comments from the teacher, students and one parent, showed that in this particular school context a national approach to History was favoured,

and the view that one main purpose of History was to support Australia's democracy was shared.

While the view that History was important to develop informed citizens was most apparent at SA3, students at another school (SA5) explained that they thought learning about politics and systems of democracy was important. These students had a particular interest in Roman democracy. This demonstrated, that while not a predominant purpose assigned to History in other school contexts, it was still considered by this group, at least, as a reason that studying History was important.

5.4 Future Employment and Transferable Skills

The potential usefulness of History for future employment and the transferable skills that students were able to develop through the subject were discussed in four individual interviews with adult participants. These discussions on the potential use for History in careers was not prompted by one particular question, but arose in response to several. For instance, during an interview with a member from the History Teachers' Association of Western Australia (HTAWA) the possibility of having national standards for History skills rather than common curriculum content was highlighted after they were asked "How important is it to have a national History curriculum?". While this particular participant did not view having a national curriculum as being overall very important they felt it was "fair enough" to have national skills. "I actually think, fair enough have a national skill base to say everyone walks out with say a set of skills so to be able to write and research and go through" (HTAWA). This suggests another purpose for History education and shows an example of skills being valued over content.

Skills were seen as particularly important for students as they left school and sought employment.

Students, however, did not necessarily agree with the view that school History was preparing them to enter the workforce by developing their skills in areas such as research, analysis and writing. Students generally made their opinions known in response to questions about History being compulsory and whether they intended to continue studying History into Years 11 and 12. While these skills are transferrable and relevant in other subject areas, there seemed to be a feeling among some teachers that the value of these skills for students' future career prospects were not recognised. One teacher (SA2T) explained that at the school they taught at students selected subjects that enabled them to achieve higher scores for entrance into university.

Students study subjects that enable them to get high scores so that they get into their selected career. History and Geography here at [school name] is fairly hard to generate the idea that you can learn from History and Geography... [that they are] useful in a number of career selections. (SA2T)

At the same school (SA2) one student participant held the view that History would not help them to gain entry into university and another that "it's not going to help me in the long run". This shows that in this particular school context the transferability of the skills developed through History were not necessarily understood by students. This view may have resulted in the subject being overlooked as a subject choice in later years, once it was no longer compulsory, in favour of subjects that were seen as more career orientated.

This was, however, in contrast to the students at another South Australian school (SA3), mentioned earlier, who did seem to see studying History as at least

somewhat relevant to their post-school career goals, as demonstrated through their mentioning of the subject potentially helping them with their future careers. Several times during this focus group session these students discussed whether certain topics they had studied were beneficial to their learning, or whether the opportunity for them to have some say in the topics they studied in class would be “beneficial in the future” or “benefit them later in life” (SA3). This view was also shared by students at a school in Western Australia (WA3) also seemed to see some benefit for future careers.

The view, that History could have applications outside of school in the workforce, was shared by one of the parents (SA3P3) interviewed at the South Australian school, who felt that History as a subject was beneficial in many career paths. When asked how important they thought it was for Australian students to study History in school this parent provided an extensive reply, mostly focused on the benefits the subject could provide in after school employment.

I also think that History gives great context to all sorts of careers. You know, I’m a journalist, studying History, although, obviously modern European history, never really directly cuts across your day to day life, it gives context... You know, other careers, it must be so important to have a historical understanding at least. I’m thinking law, I’m thinking just such a wide range of careers. You know, it’s just quite unbelievable to me that it’s not compulsory to Year 12. Even doctors should have an understanding of history. (SA3P3)

This parent clearly valued History. At this same school, another parent, while valuing History, felt that the subject should only be compulsory up to Year 10 because by “Year 11 and 12 you’re really getting to the pointy end of your education and you’re directing yourself into what career point you want to go into” and students should only continue with History if they had “a passion and

[they] want to go and teach History” (SA3P1). This showed that the transferability and value of History for students wanting to follow career paths other than History teaching were not apparent to this parent, a view that was also demonstrated in the previous school mentioned (SA2).

However, this view that History could benefit students in their future careers was not shared by participants at all schools, with some participants, including parents and students, explaining that they did not see the relevance for their chosen career paths or that they valued other subjects over History (WA2, WA2P, SA1, SA2).

5.5 Catering for Student Diversity

One possible purpose for History, as already discussed, was to help students to feel connected both to their nation and to the past more generally. Australia is a multicultural nation and, as result, catering for the diversity of backgrounds amongst Australian school students, as well as the different perspectives on historical events that exist in Australian society, is difficult. The curriculum does make some provision to extend gifted students and to make learning accessible for students with disabilities and students from a non-English speaking background (Australian Curriculum, 2015b). In terms of History, however, diversity amongst students is a broader concept than provided by these categories. As was the case for some of the teacher participants, classrooms in Australia often contain students from many cultural backgrounds. These students do not always connect with the stereotypical European-Australian history taught. Achieving a balance of diverse perspectives in these cases is important in terms of helping students to feel connected to history and maintaining their engagement with the subject (Harris & Clarke, 2011, 160). While this topic of diversity does not necessarily pertain to

Australian history in the curriculum, it is related to the study of migration and its influence on Australian society and beliefs and provides a key understanding of Australia's past.

Opportunities do exist within the depth studies under the *ACHistory* to examine the diverse backgrounds of Australia's residents, and these depth studies may potentially allow teachers to help their students from various backgrounds to feel connected to aspects of Australia's past. For instance, the depth study "Migration experiences (1945-present)" offers the opportunity for students to explore the various waves of migration to Australia that occurred after World War II and how migration has influenced the national Australian identity (Australian Curriculum, 2015a). This combined with a world focus that encourages the exploration of history outside of just Australia and its borders offers opportunities for students of various cultural heritages the opportunity to connect with the past through potentially allowing them to investigate their family background.

While an integral part of the *ACHistory* was the options it provided in terms of depth studies, not all depth studies were able to be taught in each school. Whilst providing options could be an advantage for catering to the diversity amongst student backgrounds, this also potentially meant that certain aspects of Australian history could be overlooked in the education of individual students depending on their teachers' selection of depth studies. This was one recent criticism of the *ACHistory* (Norington, 2017). In theory, however, these options allowed teachers to select the depth studies that they felt would most readily connect with their students and their backgrounds.

There were mixed views amongst the participants as to whether the curriculum was able to cater for the diversity of Australian students' views and backgrounds. Five teachers believed that the curriculum offered them enough flexibility to be able to adapt it for the students in their classes. However, other teachers stated that they either did not have enough time to do this (WA1T), or did not believe that the curriculum took into account the backgrounds of their students (SA1T, SA2T, WA1T, WA2T, WA3T, V1T). In general, students and parents also held mixed views on whether the content of the curriculum took sufficient account of their family backgrounds.

Student participants had varied family backgrounds, with some students or their families originating from somewhere other than Australia. This was reflective of the fact that Australia was a multicultural country.

C: Do you feel like history in class relates to your family at all?

S1: Sometimes, because my family is half Greek, half Macedonian, so when we talk about that sort of thing you can relate to it, because sometimes we talk about it at home as well.

S2: We never really talk about it in class though. Just European history.
(WA3)

Students who came from diverse backgrounds tended to not find the history they learnt about in school reflected or was relevant to their own family backgrounds.

C: Do you feel like the history you learn in school is relevant to your family's history? ...

S4: Not really. I come from another country.

S1: Some people maybe, but not for other people. (WA1)

This apparent lack of relevance to the history taught in schools was also possibly related to the extent students felt connected with their own family's the past.

When asked “To what extent do you feel that the history you learn about in school is relevant to you and your family?” one student replied “Not much...I guess because it’s all in the past, I don’t know” (SA2). Another student (SA1) felt that school History did not reflect their culture as she felt that it focused on Indigenous culture rather than European. This could have been connected in part to frustrations about repetition, as discussed earlier in Chapter Seven, but also potentially to the feeling of disconnection between this particular type of history and the way this particular student viewed the evolution of Australian society and its influence on her own culture.

Often parents of Anglo-Saxon or British-Australian (SA2P, SA3P1, SA3P3, WA2P) descent found the content relatable to their children’s family backgrounds, but those from other European (SA3P1, SA4P) or overseas (WA1P) backgrounds found it less so. Another parent (SA3P2) from an Anglo-Saxon background felt that the curriculum had more of a global focus, particularly in the later years, rather than on her family’s cultural background. However, as her family’s cultural background had a large presence in Australian culture, in her words “If [her children] don’t know about it by now, then they have had their heads in the sand for their 17 years or 16 years of life” (SA3P2).

When asked, one member of a History Teachers’ Association said that he felt that the curriculum was able to successfully cater to the diversity of values and backgrounds of students, due to its varied content, choices, and the opportunities to look at more than just “white men with guns”.

I’d say it does because some of those units, say Year 10 with the cultural history, they are really a lot of fun, they’re really exciting and students enjoy that and they’re engaging with it. I think there’s also one of the great

strengths of the curriculum is that...it allows teachers to explore what existed in Australia before, say for example, prior to World War 1, the Great War...I can say now that we are very conscious in the HTAA, the associations generally, that History should not be about white men with guns, it's a lot more than that.

C: Do you think it has successfully avoided that?

I believe it has. Yes, [there are] mandated topics, of course, the Great War and the Second World War, but there's more than enough choice. That's another aspect of the curriculum that has been very much well received by teachers and that is...there [are] choices. Teachers like choices. Teachers like options. They get very comfortable when they see that. Yes, they can accept mandated tasks, but they do not oblige by a system where everything is mandated and I think that's a very wise thing to do. (HTASA)

Despite this, some participants held the opinion that catering for student diversity was not the role of the curriculum alone, and achieving a balance of diversity within their classroom was the teacher's responsibility.

I don't think the curriculum needs to do that, it needs to be interpreted by the teacher to do that. So, the curriculum is giving guidelines, it is giving place marks that you should be getting to as performance standards. That needs to be elaborated to suit individual class understanding, interests, and local aspects of what you are doing. So that's the teacher's job. I think the curriculum gives you enough scope to do that with time, and a range of resources. (SA3T)

One other teacher (SA4T) agreed with this viewpoint, which was also shared by the participants from the History Teachers' Associations.

The diversity comes down to how well qualified and how well experienced and how well metttled teachers are in the classroom and by diversity I mean accessibility, differentiation. I'm thinking of there in the classroom. (HTASA)

Likewise, the History Teachers' Association member from Western Australia stated that while she initially thought the curriculum was quite restrictive, she thought that in terms of diversity the Australian Curriculum had "given it a good try [with] the values and stuff in there" (HTAWA). However, while she thought that the curriculum catered for diversity "to a degree", she felt that

...diversity is what's reflected within your classroom as well, and it's the how you do it that's sees you catering to those four students [from different backgrounds]... you can be teaching, I don't know, Medieval Europe, and still be catering for the diversity of learners within your classroom. Just because you've got the content based on Europe that doesn't mean that everyone ...who isn't from England, shouldn't learn that. (HTAWA)

Teachers, specifically, were asked two related questions about their experiences teaching from the *ACHistory*. Firstly, teachers were asked to reflect on whether they felt the curriculum took into account the backgrounds of their students, and secondly, if they found the curriculum easily adaptable.

Teachers (SA1T, V1T, SA2T) who reported that they worked in schools with students from a range of cultural backgrounds tended to respond that the *ACHistory* did not take into account the backgrounds of their students. This was similar for teachers whose students came from recent arrival backgrounds, or even students whose families had lived in Australia for multiple generations, but did not fit into the stereotypical Anglo-Saxon Australian background. One teacher in Western Australia explained that despite many of his students being multigenerational Australians there was still, at times, difficulty in connecting the content of the curriculum to their backgrounds.

...A lot of our students...are Greek, Italian, really in that post World War migrant era Australian history... So, I think in many ways what we're

having to teach in 7-10 doesn't really tap into their background. I mean if that's the keyword in that question, backgrounds of the students, then I would say maybe not. I mean we don't have a big islander community, we don't have sort of any of the communities that would sort of easily latch up to some of those alternatives in the depth studies. You know they could have been really interesting in a different context. But for us, if you sort of look at the background of most of our kids, I mean we've got a large section of our school that would be multigenerational Australian and I suppose the Year 9 topics World War I, World War II, yeah, there's probably some interesting background... work that you can do there, but you know for those kids I've done it in the past and said 'right would anyone have a World War I or World War II ancestor?' and a lot of the kids it's 'No, we came to Australia in the 50s. Not unless you can get us in contact with the Italian archives'. (WA3T)

The ability to create connections with students from diverse backgrounds using the content of the curriculum was also an issue for teachers who taught students whose families had recently arrived in Australia. For instance, one teacher from South Australia responded that

We are a very multicultural school, we have a lot of refugee families that come here and I suppose, once again focusing on Year 9, that the curriculum, 'Making a nation', focusing on sort of the start of the Industrial Revolution and then moving through the English colonisation of Australia and the building of the nation of Australia, I suppose, if you're coming from an Asian, African or Middle Eastern background, is probably not something that you'll feel very connected to. (SA1T)

This is similar to the response given by another teacher in South Australia, who focused on the lack of background knowledge which students from other cultures are required to overcome in order to be successful in the subject.

C: Do you think the current History curriculum takes into account the background of your students?

I think the answer is definitely 'no'. In our changing society, maybe from the 1990s onwards, where we've taken a large influx of refugees and people who have migrated, you have a lot of trouble sometimes enthusing those students looking at a European background country with its root really in United Kingdom, Great Britain. They get involved in it, but they don't have the background knowledge that Australia actually is a convict settled country, except for South Australia, and then how does it come about.... So, that background knowledge which a lot of Australians have as young students is not held by the new immigrants. (SA2T)

This lack of assumed knowledge when teaching international students was similarly mentioned by another teacher from South Australia.

Year 10 is the hardest one to do, because it has such a particular emphasis on Australia, and assumes a knowledge, which if you come in in Year 10 from China, for example, that's actually challenging. All the other year levels are fine, because the case studies are more independent. We find the Chinese kids don't come knowing about World War I, for example, it's not even a concept... because China wasn't in World War I and it's not even a term they recognise. And so they need special help and assistance and scaffolding in order to get to the point where they can really be engaged. So, the other year groups it's not really a problem. Most of our foreign students come from Asia. So, they're fine. We make sure there's an Asian unit in everything we do so they find that embracing. A lot of our other students are from Europe and they don't have a problem, they've got the cultural background. (SA3T)

At this school, the faculty had chosen to plot out their History pathway from Year 7 through to Year 12, using the depth study options, to ensure that Asian and Australian studies were covered at each year level where possible. In this way the school was able to make use of the flexibility available under the curriculum to cater to the backgrounds of their students (SA3T).

Another area where the diversity of student backgrounds can become an issue is in terms of religious backgrounds. Although this was raised by only one teacher, as he was teaching at a religious based school, this was a particular concern for him. When asked if he felt the curriculum took into account the backgrounds of his students he replied in detail.

Not entirely. I find it to be a skewed curriculum. There are gaps in the curriculum that I feel are there by deliberate design. For instance, medieval history stops at around 1500, the curriculum skips the Reformation. The curriculum is also skewed in that it takes an approach based on an evolutionary understanding of history. That is, of course, just some peoples' understanding and interpretation of history. I am supposed to teach that the human race came out of Africa 60,000 years ago. I don't believe that to be true, although the makers of the curriculum do believe it. I base my evidence on historical artefacts and the Bible. That tells me that people came out of the Middle East around 5000 years ago. So, a completely different story. Which one is true? That's a matter of belief. But the [ACHistory] makes no room for alternative interpretations. Time is needed to be able to adapt the curriculum. The WA curriculum has taken some stuff out so the content is more manageable. With the Australian Curriculum they say the achievement standards are skills based, but you have to cover all the content. I feel there is a discrepancy there. (WA2T)

This is once again a demonstration of how, in some ways, history is often about different interpretations, based on different primary and secondary sources. While student backgrounds and adaptability in terms of religion were not mentioned by other participating teachers, it is likely that it could be an issue in schools of different faiths, such as Islamic or Jewish schools.

Like the above teacher from a religious school, other teachers from multicultural schools did not think that the curriculum took into account the backgrounds of

their students. This did not mean that they all did not find the curriculum easy to adapt. One teacher stated that he thought it was “pretty easily adaptable... with restrictions” (SA1T), while another was pleased with the cross-curricular connections that could be made (SA2T). This view, however, was not shared by their colleague in Victoria (V1T) who felt that even though there were some options to choose topics that focused on Asian cultures, for example, most schools did not go down this path.

One teacher in Western Australia felt that continuous change to the curriculum in his state had meant that adapting the curriculum had been challenging. This, however, was not a flaw with the design of the curriculum itself.

I think it has been difficult to adapt up to this point in time simply because we've been dealing with constant change and maybe haven't had the time to really drill down into how we can adapt it, and I think that's a question we're only really starting to ask now. Now that we've got some certainty on what we're teaching at what year level, what resources we are going to be able to use for the students and the question of textbooks, that's really something that we've only really nipped down in the last 6 months. So now that all of those things have lined up that's something we're going to be working on, but it hasn't been easy within the parameters that we've had so far to make it really adaptable for the students' benefit. (WA3T)

Overall, five teachers (SA1T, SA2T, SA3T, SA4T, SA5T) involved in this study said that they felt the curriculum was easily adapted to suit the needs of their students. It is worth noting that these teachers all came from South Australia. The responses of participants in this area demonstrated that in certain contexts the curriculum was able to be adapted to some extent to meet the needs of student diversity in individual schools; however, there was still room for potential

improvements to the curriculum in this area, if it was accepted that this was a goal for the curriculum to achieve.

In the media articles used for triangulation, the issue of diversity amongst Australian students in relation to the *ACHistory* appeared in connection to calls for an increased focus on Western civilisation and Judeo-Christian values (Hurst, 2014). For instance, reviewer Kevin Donnelly was quoted, saying “The history curriculum, in addition to uncritically promoting diversity and difference instead of what binds as a community and a nation, undervalues western civilisation and the significance of Judeo-Christian values to our institutions and way of life” (Hurst, 2014). However, more commonly, diversity was not mentioned at all in these articles, even when an increase in Western civilisation in the curriculum was discussed (Norington, 2017; Willingham, 2018; Wiltshire, 2017).

In the peer-reviewed articles used for triangulation concerns around diversity and the ability to adopt the curriculum were apparent in the argument for the greater inclusion of local and state history that would allow, for instance, Indigenous students to find connections (Fricker, 2017).

5.6 Historical Empathy

The development of historical empathy was listed by one teacher as a purpose for teaching History in schools. As one teacher (V1T) explained, “...for me it’s more about the skills, it’s more about developing empathy and understanding”. This teacher, located in Victoria, had a focus on developing skills, however, also saw the development of historical empathy as an important part of studying History.

However, for some students developing empathy for historical figures or societies can be challenging. The students of the same teacher mentioned earlier, explained that at times empathising with the people who lived in the past was difficult for them.

S3: I don't like the sadness of it all and, like, the things that... people did.

C: *So, things like...*

S3: Like the wars and executing and stuff.

S2: Some of the work, but most of it's fine... we do a lot of stuff where we have to put our self in the perspective. I don't like that, I don't know why. I just find it hard to connect sometimes. (V1)

This suggests that one of the barriers, at least in this instance, was the content, with one student finding it hard to empathise with those who took part in wars and violent events.

However, another student in Western Australia seemed to enjoy the opportunity to empathise with people in the past and appreciated the ability to gain different perspectives. This student reflections on History included that: "... It's just interesting and it changes the perspective we have on other people around us and how we like, conversation... sort of like, you have to realise what other people have gone through" (WA3).

The development of historical empathy did not seem to be a strong purpose for teaching History, with only one teacher (V1T) and two student groups (V1, WA3) mentioning it.

5.7 Learning from Past Mistakes

One common point raised by several parents, students, and teachers alike during conversations about History was the need to “learn from past mistakes” or “learn from the past”. This seemed to be a common reason that learning History was considered important.

Another point related to learning from the past was the potential ability to anticipate the future due to a greater understanding of human motives and their place in the world (Melluish, 2007). Students at three different schools in South Australia (SA1, SA2 SA3), when asked for their thoughts on studying History, raised the idea that learning about the past allowed them to learn from past mistakes and potentially help direct them in future actions.

I like it because it gives you an insight into how things will happen in the future even though you’re learning about the past. Like, it gives you ideas and concepts that you can build on and learn from. (SA3)

The school of thought that history repeats itself was evident as one of the reasons studying History is considered valuable. Another student explained their view on history as “you can’t move forward without seeing the past” (SA2).

5.8 Academic Views on the Purpose of History Education

Academic peer-reviewed articles provided a range of perspectives on the purpose of teaching History in Australian schools. These ranged from the development of particular skills through to the development of a shared national story.

Some of these articles suggested purposes that were comparable to those provided by the participants. One article (Martin, 2016) suggested that there were two main

opposing purposes behind History. The first purpose was to “seek the exaltation of certain stories or versions of the past for the cultivation of a shared identity and sense of civic duty”, while the second purpose is to “highlight the importance of skills for appropriate engagement with content relating to the past” (Martin, 2016, 4-5). The first purpose, or paradigm as the article called them, emphasised the importance of teaching the national story and aimed to promote national pride and unity. The second purpose was focused on the development of skills. Likewise, Peterson (2016), from the University of South Australia, also commented on the push for national pride and the development of skills behind the *ACHistory*.

Developing active and informed citizens also emerged as a purpose behind History in one academic article (Sharp, 2015). The author of this article also commented on the importance of developing active and informed citizens and held a view that was comparable to that of one teacher participant (SA3T).

However, some of the purposes attributed to History differed from those suggested by the participants in this study. For instance, one article proposed that there should be a greater focus on human rights in the *ACHistory* (BurrIDGE, Buchanan & Chodkiewicz, 2014). This was an issue that was not explicitly raised by any participants as a purpose behind teaching History, however, it should be noted that the participant from the HTASA commented on both the civil rights and workers’ movements and there was “some very good work being done in those year levels” (HTASA). While this participant did not mention human rights education as a purpose behind History, it is perhaps an implied purpose.

5.9 Media Views on the Purpose of History Education

A predominant focus in media articles for the inclusion of History in schools was the promotion of a national story. This was evident in the push for a greater inclusion of Western civilisation and Judeo-Christian values that appeared in many articles in 2014 around the time of the *Review of the Australian Curriculum*. The view that History should be celebrating the achievements of Western civilisation and the progress of Australia as a nation demonstrated the belief that History should serve the purpose of encouraging students to feel proud of their nation (Ashton, 2014; Crowe, 2014; Donnelly, 2017). This view was not apparent in the responses from participants in this study.

The view on the importance of a shared national identity was present in some of the media articles used for triangulation, and was evidently the predominant purpose of History education in these articles. (Hurst, 2014; Fox Koob, 2017; Balogh & Kelly, 2017; Daley, 2014;). In one article, titled “Is the national curriculum biased? Let’s have a classroom debate”, the author notes that “Naturally the history curriculum is singled out; what we take from our country’s history determines how we see ourselves, individually and as peoples, nations, tribes and cultures” (Daley, 2014). This demonstrated an understanding that History had the potential to shape students’ views of the nation.

However, while many articles supported an increase in the inclusion of Western civilisation’s achievements in the curriculum, one article published on *The Conversation* pointed out that the proposed focus on Western civilisation that was favoured by conservative politicians and commentators had a “dark side” that should not be ignored (Hassan, 2014). This could potentially be linked to the

views of participants' that it was important to learn from the past to avoid repeating mistakes.

While the goal of developing informed citizens was raised by one participant in particular (SA3T) and seemed to be supported by other participants in this school context, the media articles used for triangulation offered different opinions to those provided by these participants. There were a number of articles arguing whether the *ACHistory* demonstrated an ideological bias (Fox Koob, 2017; Taylor, 2014a; Halbert; 2015). Concerns over political or ideological bias were related to concerns that students would be indoctrinated or influenced to vote a particular way after they left school. In effect, there was concern that students would not leave school as informed citizens. Reports that Christopher Pyne felt that the curriculum was politically biased because, among other things, it “elevates the role of the trade union movement” (Taylor, 2014b), demonstrate that this was a concern, although not one felt by the author of that particular article.

In contrast to the views of some participants, the skills and employment opportunities that could be provided through studying History did not seem to be a concern in media articles. Employability and the skills developed through History did not appear to be a topic considered in the media articles used for triangulation. Concerns that the overall Australian Curriculum (not just History) was too “bloated” and did not allow students enough time to focus on basic skills such as literacy and numeracy, however, point to the skills developed through History not being viewed as vital in comparison (Topsfield & Knott, 2014).

Finally, other purposes for History education raised by participants, such as the development of Historical empathy, did not seem to be apparent in media articles. Overall, this shows that the purpose for History education that was presented in these media articles did not appear to be in agreement with the views expressed by participants.

5.10 Summary

This chapter examined the purposes for studying History in schools in participants' opinions. While participants were not asked a particular question about the purpose for studying History this did not stop them from providing their opinions.

The participants saw several purposes for the teaching of History in schools. These purposes included the development of national pride and a shared national identity, the development of informed citizens who would go on to participate in Australia's democratic system, and the potential to learn from the past by remembering past mistakes and actions.

The diversity amongst Australian students was not a prominent concern in media data, but was discussed with participants. While some teachers did not feel that the curriculum catered for their students, whose connection to Australian history had begun long after Settlement and Federation, others felt that catering for this diversity and connecting students to Australia's past was not the role of the curriculum, but was instead the responsibility of classroom teachers.

The participants did not all agree on the purpose of History in schools, however, they seemed to agree that it did serve a purpose and should be taught at least to a certain level. Students and some parents did not always see the relevance of studying History to their future career goals, however, for other participants this use for the subject was apparent.

In comparison, the media and peer-reviewed articles used for triangulation provided several purposes for History. Some of these purposes were shared, such as the development of national pride and identification, although were emphasised more in media articles than by participants. Likewise, national identification and the development of skills were mentioned both in the peer-reviewed articles and by participants, however, there seemed to be a greater emphasis or importance placed on skills in the peer-reviewed articles than in participant response. However, other purposes, such as the promotion of human rights, were not apparent in the explicit purposes provided by participants.

The next chapter examines the development of the *ACHistory* and participants' feelings on the process.

CHAPTER SIX

POST-REVIEW REFLECTIONS ON THE PROCESS OF DEVELOPING A NATIONAL HISTORY CURRICULUM

6.1 Introduction

While some commentators (Adoniou, Loudon, Zyngler & Riddle, 2014; Adoniou, Loudon, Savage, 2015) have questioned whether Australia currently has a national History curriculum (Department of Education, 2014a), it is important to recognise that this was the original intent when the *Australian Curriculum: History (ACHistory)* was developed. This chapter focuses on participants' feelings in regards to development of the *ACHistory* and their involvement in it after the 2014 review.

Among the teacher and History Teachers' Association participants in this study, five were directly involved in the original consultation process. Two teachers had been involved in the process for other subject areas. The participants with the most involvement in the development process were the members of History Teachers' Associations. Since some teacher participants were also members of their relevant History Teachers' Association, they were doubly involved in the process. To clarify, all History Teachers' Association members were also teachers; however, for this project, a distinction needs to be made between teachers who were involved as a "teacher participant" (who might or might not be

a member of an association) at one of the schools that also had student and parent participants, and those teachers who were members of a History Teachers' Association but worked at a school that was not participating in the project. These were involved in the project only through their personal membership in the association.

The student and parent participants in this project did not have any personal involvement in either the consultation or development process. As such their perspectives on the process came from a stance of either wishing they had been able to participate or, in some cases, not having any knowledge, or concern, about the process. For this chapter, the views of each school stakeholder group in this study are examined separately, due to their different levels of inclusion in the development process and how this informed the opinions evident in each group.

In addition to different levels of involvement in the consultation process, there were also important changes in state contexts that were important to consider. For instance, the Western Australian Curriculum was released at the end of 2016 to take the place of the Australian Curriculum in Western Australian schools (SCSA, 2014). The development of this state-based curriculum was announced early in the implementation stage of the Australian Curriculum in this state (ACARA, 2014). The changes to the curriculum that occurred in Victoria and Western Australia influenced the opinions of some participants.

With this change in curriculum in Western Australia, teachers were transitioning to a combined Humanities and Social Sciences subject in both primary and secondary years at the time of the interviews for this project. The Western

Australian School Curriculum and Standards Authority made the following statement in relation to the *ACHistory*,

Recognising that schools are currently implementing History, this syllabus will currently remain in place until Dec 2016. After this time, History context is embedded in the Humanities and Social Sciences syllabus. (SCSA, 2014)

This particular change was announced in 2015 and meant that from 2016 History in Western Australia did not continue as a stand-alone subject, but became part of a broader learning area. In Western Australia some of the depth study options that were originally intended as part of the Australian Curriculum (National Curriculum Board, 2009a) to allow teachers to choose topics that they felt best suited their class or context were no longer taught in Western Australia as of December 2016 (Garnett & Blagaich, 2015). For instance, at Year 9 the Industrial Revolution depth study, which was one of three options under the Australian Curriculum, became a compulsory depth study in Western Australian schools using the Western Australian Curriculum, meaning that the other previous options of “Progressive ideas and movements” and “Movement of people” as depth studies were no longer available (SCSA, 2014).

Likewise, in Victoria, at the time that participants were interviewed schools were transitioning from AusVELS to the Victorian Curriculum F-10. The Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority website stated that,

The Victorian Curriculum F-10 is the new curriculum for Victorian schools. It incorporates the Australian Curriculum and reflects Victorian standards and priorities.

The AusVELS curriculum was the initial incorporation of the Australian Curriculum areas of English, Mathematics, History and Science into the Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS). The AusVELS curriculum will continue to be available until December 2016. (VCAA, n.d.a)

The main change in History in Victoria was the presentation of the curriculum as a “continuum of learning and the structural design” (VCAA, n.d.a).

6.2 Participant Views on the Process of Developing the *Australian Curriculum: History*

The participants in this project varied from students who personally had no involvement in the actual process of developing the curriculum all the way through to members of History Teachers’ Associations, some of whom were heavily involved in the process through providing feedback and joining consultative groups.

6.2.1 History Teachers’ Association Members: Mixed Thoughts on the Development Process

The involvement of the History Teachers’ Association of Australia was, according to the view of one participant, “almost by default” (HTAA). He clarified this feeling, by saying

I’m not sure that initially there was much intention to involve the association other than in a body that would join in the consultation program and as the process evolved, I certainly became quite involved personally... As it’s a national curriculum in history, we were always

going to be involved from our point of view, but how we got involved from the government or ACARA point of view [was] I think somewhat by accident. (HTAA)

It is likely that the involvement of the other state-based associations, which in turn are linked with the national HTAA, came about in a similar manner. The involvement of the History Teachers' Associations included being involved in preliminary discussions, through state-based and national stakeholder meetings, and later providing feedback on shape papers and drafts of the curriculum.

The three History Teachers' Association members interviewed were all involved in the development process of the *ACHistory*. Through their respective associations, all three took part in a range of state-based, as well as national meetings, where they were consulted along with other stakeholder groups about what they felt should be included in the final *ACHistory*. "...each of the states had their own events and then at times we all came together" (HTASA). Due to one participant's position in his Association (which for privacy reasons I have not specified), he was involved in the writing phase of the development process, as well as providing feedback on behalf of his association once drafts were released (HTAA).

One key area that participants from the History Teachers' Associations were able to comment on were the levels of satisfaction they experienced, as members of associations on the consultation and overall thoroughness of the curriculum development process prior to the 2014 review. When asked about their

satisfaction with the involvement of the associations, these participants provided mixed responses.

The participant from the History Teachers' Association of South Australia was satisfied with the opportunities for participation his association was given, describing it as "highly consultative".

I would say that we were given every opportunity to be involved, at the state level. There were more than enough opportunities to provide feedback and ... that was collective feedback and so the association members had more than enough opportunity to provide feedback. In both the sessions and also online. (HTASA)

In contrast, another participant from the national association described feeling "alarmed" by the curriculum development process. In his opinion, "they [ACARA] were making it up as they went along the whole time" (HTAA). This demonstrates the range of feelings amongst the participants who took part in the development process.

While the participant from the History Teachers' Association of Western Australia listed the many ways her state association was involved in the consultation process, she noted the discrepancy between what was actually said in the meetings and what ended up in the curriculum drafts.

So, what [participants at the meetings] said isn't what's necessarily going to be in there... it's just what you think is essential, because every state is quite different. So [each state has] things that they feel is essential to go through (HTAWA).

The participant from the HTASA reinforced this point quite strongly, particularly in relation to the senior secondary curriculum. He felt that the development process was thorough, but noticed

...a disconnect between what some writers would put forward and the writing process, and what refinements occurred at [the] bureaucratic level. And I think, I think that way, the writers were doing their very best to incorporate the genuine needs and concerns of the teachers, the practitioners, in the classroom and when they incorporated some of these things, some of these ideas, they found that they had been either diluted or ignored in the bureaucratic process. And that, that, genuinely frustrated a number of writers. (HTASA)

These last comments from the Western and South Australian participants point to the recurring difficulty that arose in the consultation and development process of the *ACHistory* because of the different views that were upheld by each state. The participant from Western Australia went into the complexity involved in some depth.

C: So do you feel the development process was thorough?

I think it was. I think you're never going to make everyone happy when you have so many different states and ... so many different voices and interest groups, because you have each state [that] sees the way they do it as right.

So, of course, being Western Australian I think what we do is best, but we do it very, very differently than other states. Our History, we have a smaller period, and we would go into a lot of depth, where other people would do ... a bigger period of time...[T]he depth in which we look at things and do things is maybe a lot different than in other states, so they might go over the surface and [leave] things out. Source analyses are very, very detailed, very complex, and yet some other states have multi choice answers in their big exam and in WA we haven't had multi-choice, you know, straight from text and stuff for, I don't know, over a decade.

So, people have very different ways of doing things and so you're bringing in all these sectors who think what they are doing is okay, very reasonable people, very intelligent people, and usually very argumentative people. Then you're throwing in the pressure groups, so things like the Asia foundation, sustainability, aboriginality stuff and if all these pressure groups want to do what they want to do and then you're throwing in people who have their set down restraints as well and, so it is a really complex process. So, I think they did the best that they can and I think it's going to be very difficult to come up with one model that all states do. (HTAWA)

While this complexity existed at the Foundation to Year 10 level, one participant considered that the problem of state differences was not as prominent at this level in comparison to the complexity that arose when it came to the senior secondary curriculum. Differences between state approaches to History teaching were identified as being a particular issue when it came to the senior secondary years. While this thesis does not look at the senior secondary curriculum, it should be noted that there was consultation on a potential national curriculum for the final years of schooling.

We knew that there was going to be consensus generally between the states and territories for the Foundation to Year 10. We were confident of that.

C: Were there any things that there wasn't a consensus on?

Straight away, you could see it was coming in the senior curriculum. Senior curriculum is quite fascinating in how that's played out. (HTASA).

The difficulties this participant points out at the senior secondary level can be seen as a good example of the way that differences between the states, and the stakeholders in each state, were able to shape the development of the curriculum.

That the senior curriculum has not been rolled out nationally is perhaps also telling.

There is an Australian Curriculum for the senior years, it actually exists, but in its current shape and form it's not workable... There's no fluency through the document. What you'll find with the current document is more what each state and territory desperately wants to keep in the curriculum... The states and territories, I'll be very honest about this, were far more precious about what they taught at Year 11 or 12. (HTASA)

As the participant from the HTASA pointed out, while the senior secondary curriculum was developed, it has not been implemented.

Interestingly, differences in opinions about the importance of developing a national *ACHistory* also emerged. One viewed it as important, due to the size of Australia in terms of population, movement between states, avoiding repetition of content, and in resourcing (HTASA). While this participant held that a national curriculum, not just in History, was desirable, he also noted this was influenced by his own views on Federation.

...I'm a Federalist, but I think that you have to recognise my bias here, and that's obvious from the roles I have. I think federally. I think state, there's no problem there, but I think state as part of the Commonwealth (HTASA). A second History Teachers' Association member agreed that it was important to have a national *ACHistory*, but believed that even at the conclusion of the process, Australia was still lacking a national curriculum in History.

There would be advantages to Australia having a national History curriculum, but...the outcome of a national History process is that we don't. It's different things in different states and that is to a certain extent inevitable, because of different states' histories and so on and so on, [and the] politics of curriculum, and by that I mean the federation politics of the states and territories (HTAA).

In contrast to this support for the importance of developing a national History curriculum, a third participant stated that she “actually [didn’t] think it’s important at all” (HTAWA). She explained her reason for feeling that a national History curriculum was not “vital” was because

[T]hey lost a lot of stuff when they went to a national curriculum ...they lost the local stuff. You know, Western Australian history in high school now, isn’t really [there], unless you talk about a Western Australian soldier who fought in the war [that] kind of thing... Where before we had a lot of that there, a lot of the ...things like Vietnam War isn’t really covered that well, so that’s lost in that, I think. (HTAWA)

This participant instead felt that a national skills base that equipped students with “a set of skills so to be able to write and research” (HTAWA) would be more useful than set content.

Overall, while the History Teachers’ Association members involved in this project had some issues with some aspects, ultimately, they seemed satisfied with the development process of the *ACHistory*. Even the one participant (HTAA) who expressed the most reservations about the process, explained when asked for opinions on the curriculum document itself, as the product of the process,

I wrote an article at the end saying that it was adequate. Curriculum syllabus documents are generally adequate, but ultimately, they’re only a piece of paper and it depends on what teachers will do with them. (HTAA)

The outcome of the process in this instance was judged acceptable by the HTA participants, even if the process itself left some room for improvement. Further commentary from the History Teachers’ Association participants relating to the content of the curriculum is discussed in the next chapters.

6.2.2 Teachers: Were They Listened To?

As noted earlier, consultation was supposed to be a large part of the development process behind the *ACHistory*. Teachers were one of the groups of school stakeholders who were consulted. There seemed to be a disagreement amongst the teachers involved in this project about how much they as a group were considered when the curriculum was developed. This variation in opinion can in part be attributed to the extent to which individual teachers had actually been involved in the process. Some were both heavily involved in and very much aware of the process. In contrast, many others admitted to not having much knowledge of the process at all.

The teacher participants from three states varied in their involvement in the development process of the *ACHistory*. Those teachers who were also members of their state History Teachers' Association (while teaching at the same time) tended to have been involved in the process. Some teacher participants who were not involved in the consultation process for the *ACHistory*, were, however, involved for other subject areas, such as Civics and Citizenship (WA3 T).

Most teachers who were involved in this research study did not have an extensive understanding of the development process of the *ACHistory*. While they were able to comment on their views on the development process, as they understood it, some responded that they were “not quite sure, because I really don't know what process took place, other than wham, bam, here we've got a new curriculum”(SA4T) or “just [didn't] know enough” (SA5T). This demonstrated that either information did not reach these teachers during the development process or that perhaps they were too busy or uninterested at the time.

One teacher, however, who was aware of and involved in the process held the opinion that the consultation with teachers and the development process as a whole was “very well done” (SA3T). He described the process as

a very costly exercise. I’m also the [role] of the History Teachers’ Association of South Australia. So, the associations were involved, the individual sectors of education were involved and then there was scope for individual people to be involved...not everybody got picked and [some] fought over it, but as an overall process I think the model was fine. And there [were] multiple levels of consultation at each stage. (SA3T)

At a different point of the interview this teacher explained that he

was fairly comfortable with the mechanism they had set up, which was essentially a respected academic, someone like Stuart [Macintyre], state groups that were interested and knowledgeable, boards of study, then...the consultation with the community. And if you remove the lobby groups that responded the rest of the reaction was actually fine. Bear in mind those are the broad strokes. The individual schools are in fact filling in the detail and that’s an important part of it you have to have as well. (SA3T)

This comment suggests overall satisfaction with the process, as well as an understanding of how the process continues at the school level with schools adapting the curriculum requirements to suit to their cohorts. The one hint of dissatisfaction was with the mention of the involvement of lobby groups. It is worth noting that lobby or “pressure” groups were also mentioned by the History Teachers’ Association of Western Australia, as groups involved in the consultation process “who maybe shouldn’t have had that representation” (HTAWA). These two comments suggest that these participants felt that these lobby groups were given more influence than they merited.

The only area which this teacher (SA3T) mentioned as an aspect he disliked in the development process, related to the implementation phase, where states were able to essentially depart from the “vision” of one national curriculum. As he explained,

Where I disagreed with it was where the states had the right to actually opt out as opposed to actually keeping the vision of the national curriculum...What’s recently started, that fragmentation. The Victorians are doing their own thing, for example. It’s a real shame... it looks like everyone is going to go their own way, with the Sydney curriculum, at least, and many other areas it’s going to go. So, the vision of the national curriculum is not going to last. (SA3T)

This participant (SA3T) was located in a state, South Australia, which up to that point had chosen to keep the *ACHistory* as it was written, rather than adapting it as had been done in other states such as Victoria and Western Australia.

SA3T was an older teacher with over 30 years of experience. He had been involved in the development process through participating in some of the “early conferences” and involvement with “the independent schools board constructing their feedback” (SA3T). In contrast to this participant was one teacher (V1T) who had not yet embarked upon her teaching career when the development of the *ACHistory* was underway.

I wasn’t teaching then, so I don’t really know how much involvement teachers had, but I think with any curriculum, I think there used to be curriculums come in, and I don’t think teachers have had that much involvement in it. We just get told here’s what you teach. (V1T)

Another highly experienced teacher, who did not take part in the development of the *ACHistory*, but was instead a part of the development process for a related subject area, offered views on the History development process, influenced in part

by his involvement in the other subject development process (WA3T). While this teacher from his examination of the *ACHistory* document could “...certainly see that there has been some input from a wide variety of teachers and teaching groups”, from his involvement with the Civics and Citizenship framework development, judged that it was likely “...that there were lots of different agendas being pushed there and groups having input into that process”. This is perhaps another comment on the inclusion of lobby groups. Although he thought “the views [of teachers] were taken into account” he could not be sure “how much other agendas came in over the top of that” (WA3T). This comment suggested that while this participant felt that teachers had been listened to, there had been some influence over the *ACHistory* from other sources.

The views of some teachers were shaped by knowledge of the development process for other subject areas or state-based curriculum documents. This was particularly the case for the three teachers from Western Australia, where they were transitioning to the Western Australian Curriculum document. When asked how far she felt that teachers were taken into account during the development process, one teacher replied,

Not a lot. If it's anything like the WA curriculum... SCSA [School Curriculum and Standards Authority] has said when I went to a [professional development session], ‘We consulted hundreds and hundreds of teachers’...I have a unique position [roles removed for participant privacy]...I don't know anyone who was consulted. The two people that I know who were originally consulted, were no longer consulted when they made their views apparent. So, if the Australian Curriculum was anything like that, then not very much. (WA1T)

This comment demonstrates how the context that the participant was working in may have influenced their feelings towards the development process for the *ACHistory*.

Another teacher participant from Western Australia also compared their views of the *ACHistory* development process to the consultation process for the Western Australian Curriculum. This teacher explained, he was “...sure, the views of teachers were taken into account. Like with the WA curriculum consultation process, it doesn’t always result in the result you want” (WA2T). This teacher, like other teacher participants, felt that some attempt had been made to listen to them when the *ACHistory* was developed, but they were not sure to what extent this had actually been incorporated into the curriculum document.

In both instances (WA1T, WA2T), the negative feelings being expressed towards the process of developing the *ACHistory* were not necessarily based on the actions of ACARA, but had been influenced by a general feeling of not being listened to by educational authorities in Western Australia on other occasions. This could also be linked to the findings of researchers at Edith Cowan University who found that due to previous continual change in curriculum in Western Australia and “a flawed system with known implementation issues” many teachers were suffering from “change fatigue” (Dilkes, Cunningham & Gray, 2014, 60).

However, this impression that teachers were not always listened to, or perhaps that their opinions were not given the weight they deserved, was apparent in teachers involved in this project in all three states, not just Western Australia. There was a perception from one participant that while teachers had some input,

many “...felt that [they] weren’t being listened to, were being ignored...in favour of politicians and things” (SA1T). This view emerged amongst teacher participants who were aware that there was the opportunity to put their views forward, but did not personally participate in the process themselves. For instance, one South Australian teacher was aware that teachers had the opportunity to take part in the consultations, as illustrated by his comment:

So, we all had a say and there was opportunity for that, I don’t know how much of that was taken on board. I just don’t know enough, but I know we were given the opportunity to. (SA5T)

The point that was raised amongst the participants from the History Teachers’ Association, that what was suggested by those who were consulted did not always make it into the curriculum, is evident also in this teacher participant’s comment. This same teacher reiterated that while “it’s nice to be consulted...to what extent that ended up in the curriculum,” he was not sure (SA5T).

Such comments demonstrate that some teachers feel that their opinions were overshadowed by those of other groups, such as politicians or lobby groups, whom they considered to be much more powerful and influential. As a result, these participants felt that their views were not as likely to make it into the curriculum document.

6.2.3 Parents: Did They Have a Role in the Process?

Almost all parent participants felt that the views of parents were not taken into account or were only minimally considered when the *ACHistory* was developed. Several parents, however, did not have an opinion or responded that they did not know (WA2P). This is demonstrated by one parent’s response:

I don't think I had a view, probably because I wasn't aware what was happening until after it happened maybe. And would I have put my view in? I don't know actually whether I would have, because I wouldn't have really known what to say. (SA4P)

At the time of the interviews in 2016 it emerged that several of the parents were unaware that the Australian Curriculum was available for them to view online. One result of the 2014 review was the development of a "parent friendly" page on the Australian Curriculum website (Australian Curriculum, 2015b). However, if parents were unaware that the Australian Curriculum itself was available online, they were unfortunately unlikely to utilise this summary page either. One parent, in preparation for her interview, had looked up the *ACHistory* online that morning, but noted that it was the first time she had done so and that she had not been aware that it was there beforehand.

C: Have you had a look at the curriculum document?

I actually did this morning, because I thought, you know, I should have a proper look at it and of course it's quite wordy and dense and hard to understand as a parent.

C: Had you seen it before?

No, to be honest, I hadn't. I guess as a parent you sort of place more store in speaking to teachers and you know, that's sort of more because I don't feel like I got a huge benefit from reading through [the curriculum]. But it was okay, so there's that and that, and then they have to do that theory. It's stuff that I knew already but to have it all spelt out was just kind of yeah okay...I went through the SACE site, and no, I didn't know it was there. I mean I assume if you went looking for it [the Australian Curriculum] you'd find it, but it's not like every parent knows you can go read it whenever you'd like. It's something that you sort of have to do under your own steam. (SA3P3)

Another parent lamented the fact that information, such as the curriculum being online, was not readily shared with parents.

That's just it, there's no information that comes to parents, that we can be part of the review process, that we can make comments, that we can even look at it online. I've got no idea; it just seems to be complete lack of information and detail from the education department. (WA1 P)

However, as some of the parents acknowledged, not all other parents take as large an interest in their children's education as they did and so this would not be a concern for all parents outside of this project (WA1P, SA2P).

In line with one of the overall findings of the 2014 *Review into the Australian Curriculum* (Department of Education, 2014a, 242), six of the parents involved in this project said that they felt it was either important or a good idea for parents to be consulted about the curriculum and that they personally would have liked to have been involved. In several parent interviews, it emerged that these parents felt that they were not informed of opportunities to be consulted and they would have enjoyed the chance to provide feedback on their child's education. These six parents believed it was important or at least helpful, for parents to be able to comment and provide feedback on the curriculum (SA2P, SA3P1, SA3P3, SA4P, WA1P, WA2P). One parent stated that the opportunity for parents to comment was useful as long as,

...there is constructive criticism...I think it would be useful, because sometimes parents do actually come up with quite reasonable suggestions that can be made or even from what their children come and have conversations at home with [them about]...I don't know, but sometimes I think that there are valuable points that community members would bring up. (SA4P)

In contrast, at least one parent did not feel it was important for parents to be consulted on the curriculum as she felt it could cause problems. “No, I think that opens a can of worms. But then I would go back to saying I would like to have a say if they were just studying Aboriginal culture every year” (SA3P2). She further explained her reasoning by commenting that,

I don't know that I'd be of much value in doing that [providing feedback on the curriculum]. I've seen some very good teachers in my time and I don't think I would ever question the way they're delivering the curriculum. In terms of what our children need, maybe add a broader level, but then everybody has a different view, don't they? Some people are quite narrow in just wanting to know what's happening around them, rather than globally. (SA3P2)

This parent's view reflected the reality that she was currently “happy” with the present *ACHistory* and the way her children's teachers were interpreting it. As a result, she did not feel it was necessary for parents to provide feedback. As was evident in the first quotation above, that parent recognised that if she had not been happy with the curriculum her feelings on this question would most likely change.

Another parent from Western Australia held strong views about the quality of the curriculum and the role she felt parents should play in their children's education. When asked about the importance of parents being able to comment, she responded,

I think it's very important, I don't think it's done enough. They seem to know what's best. Well, sorry, we know our children best and we know what's going to suit them better. I hate the Australian school curriculum. I think it's the worst one I've ever seen. (WA1P)

She expanded further on her dissatisfaction with the quality of the school curriculum and the consultation with parents throughout the interview.

I don't think [parents] were taken into account at all. Otherwise I think it would be a lot different. I guess there are a lot of parents who just don't care. They really don't, but there [is] also a big majority of parents who do actually care what our children are taught.

C: What makes you feel like parents weren't taken into account?

Well, the fact that curriculum is so out of whack. There's no flow to it, it doesn't make any sense. I was an A grade student at school, and I'm looking at what she's learning and going 'how is this possibly relevant to your age group?', and it's just not. A lot of it's not relevant at all. (WA1P)

Like the experienced teacher from South Australia (SA3T), this parent felt that the possibility for states to change and alter the curriculum was not helpful.

Why can't there be uniformity throughout the states? No one is ever able to answer that question. They just go 'This is the way we do it'. Well, why? Why do they do it this way, do they actually think it's working? (WA1P)

Another parent from South Australia was in the unique position of being both a teacher (of a different subject), as well as a parent. This position, as he acknowledged, shaped the way he viewed the importance of parents utilising opportunities to provide feedback on the curriculum.

It's interesting as a teacher and a parent, I think it's quite important, but then I do understand lots of parents have very little engagement with what their students are taught at school. From my point of view, I think it's important. (SA2P)

He expanded on his perspective and why he felt it was important by explaining,

If we look at what curriculum is and how curriculum is determined, quite often the government sets the curriculum in its entirety, then we're subject to, I won't say the word manipulation, but we're subject to being taught what the government wants us to be taught, which might be a part of getting them [students] to get up to think in a certain way, and I would not like that to be, to ever be, the case. I think there should be some, not free choice, but everyone should be sort of participating in determining what the curriculum

is, because I wouldn't like to see the curriculum be the extension of government policy, for example. (SA2P)

This parent also felt that the views of parents had only been taken into account a "minimal amount". This view was shaped predominately by his role as a South Australian teacher and his disappointment in the way the states were interpreting the Australian Curriculum in his own subject area after the 2014 review and a lack of subsequent change.

I'm talking from a South Australian perspective too, I might add...because I looked at the Australian Curriculum in its entirety when it came out on the site and it looked very good, but then I looked at how the states were interpreting what they need to teach and it was very disappointing. (SA2P)

This comment once again brings up the differences between the implementation in the various states and the way this has shaped some of the perspectives evident about the *ACHistory* and the Australian Curriculum generally.

Overall, there seemed to be a wide range of opinions on the role that parents played in the development of the *ACHistory* and whether or not they ought to be provided with further opportunities to comment.

6.2.4 Students: What is Their Place in Deciding the History Curriculum?

While the students interviewed did not take part in the development process, they were asked for their opinions on whether they should be involved in determining what they learnt about in History. Student focus groups were asked both who they thought should decide what they learned about in History, and as a follow up question how much of a say they felt they should have.

While some students were aware of the *ACHistory* and what it was (SA3, SA5) many seemed to assume that decisions on topics came solely from their teachers' discretion. This is not to say that students did not have an interest in being consulted about their learning, but perhaps was more a reflection on their understanding of how the education system works. When asked about whether they thought History should be compulsory, some students expressed an acceptance that this was just the way school was (WA1) and that they were used to decisions like this being made on their behalf. As this student said, "It's just, like, school" (WA1).

Many students felt that, at least at the classroom level, they should be heard and their opinions on what they were interested in learning about should be taken into account. "We should get a say, because it's what we learn, and we should choose what we want to learn about" (SA5). While the majority of students desired to have some input into the topics taught in History lessons, some students astutely pointed out that "if [they] don't know about history then how are [they] going to know to want to learn it?" (WA3). The same group of students (WA3) also acknowledged that if the decision was entirely left up to students, they were likely to only choose the topics they perceived as "fun". This shows that this group of students were self-aware enough to understand that the input of adults was also important.

However, students' bias towards topics they perceived as "fun" was not necessarily seen as a bad thing as one group of students (WA2) felt that if they were more interested in a topic then they were more likely to learn efficiently. "If you're more interested in a subject then you're more likely to pay attention and

actually learn more about it” (WA2). One group of students from a South Australian school shared a similar opinion, and agreed that they found it easier to learn when they were interested in a topic. When asked how much of a say these students felt that they should have, one responded:

S3: I feel like we should get quite a bit. At least, like, percentage wise, at least close to 50%, because it’s us that’s learning it.

C: Can you tell me a bit more about that?

S3. Well, it’s hard for you to learn something if it’s something you don’t want to know about, but if we’re given a say, even if it’s just a small amount of a say, then it’ll be easier for us to take in the information and absorb it. And learn it. With passion!

(SA1)

Students generally felt that their opinions deserved to be considered, at least in some measure. The extent that student opinions should be taken into account in determining the content of the curriculum was an area that students disagreed on. In South Australia, another group felt that their opinions should hold the most weight in determining content.

S2: I think we’re the ones that are learning it, we should be able to have the most say.

S3: Some history is not fun to learn about. It’s boring stuff.

(SA2)

In contrast, in Western Australia, one group felt that their input into the curriculum should be “probably minimal. I mean, we shouldn’t be able to change...the whole subject matter that the teacher is teaching, but I mean we could put our two cents in about what we’d like to learn about, I guess” (WA1). As mentioned, students predominantly wanted a say at the classroom level, generally meaning they wanted their teachers to provide them with topic options and allow

them to choose topics that interested them. Most groups felt that being provided with topic options by their teachers was a good way of including them in the process.

S2: Maybe we should be given a choice. Just so we can decide what is more important to learn about, I guess.

C: So you'd like to be given options?

S2: Yeah, just to get rid of some of the less necessary subjects.

(V1)

Under the *ACHistory* it was possible for students to be given some say, with teacher discretion, due to a choice of depth studies available to teachers, however, it seemed that in these schools this was not happening.

As mentioned earlier, most students did recognise that they were not the only groups who should influence the content of the curriculum. In discussing the decision process they would like to see for the *ACHistory*, many included their teachers, and at least one group also mentioned their parents.

C: Who do you think should decide what you learn about in History?

S1: Students.

S4: I think it should be a mix of both, so we get a say but also have topics set for us.

C: And who do you think should set the topics?

S4: Like the teacher.

S5: Our parents should get a say too.

(SA4)

Three groups of students expressed some concerns about the prospect of students being given too much influence over the curriculum. While these groups did want their opinions to be taken into account, they held similar concerns that students would only pick “fun” topics or would not have the knowledge to pick the most beneficial topics.

S1: ...obviously we can't choose what we learn, because either we'll keep choosing the fun topics over and over again, and if we don't know about history then how are we going to know to want to learn it?

S3: That's the point I was going to make. It was basically that similar, just they don't know what to learn if they haven't learnt it yet.

(WA3)

Two remaining groups, both from South Australia, felt that a curriculum outline or a "base plan" that allowed some flexibility, while also providing guidance, was a good option for allowing students to have some influence, without jeopardising their History education.

S1: We should get a say, because it's what we learn and we should choose what we want to learn about.

S5: If you had like a base plan, this is what you've got to learn about, but [you have] got to choose topics in that.

S2: Yeah, that would be a lot better.

S5: Because then you could do things that you're interested in and not get bored and not actually learn anything.

(SA5)

This idea was also reflected in another group from South Australia. However, some members of this group felt it was best that the content was decided by the *ACHistory*, as they were concerned that History as a subject would not be taken seriously if students had too much say.

S1: I think we should have like just a bit of a say, but I think it should ultimately be up to the school, like the curriculum.

S2: Well, I was thinking even if every school nation-wide had the same sort of brief and they had to teach this time period if ...schools or even students could give their opinion on [it and] sort of create their own assignment, just make sure it's for their own sort of learning needs.

S3: I think it could put too much power on students to choose what we learn in History. I feel like it won't be taken seriously and it probably won't be

beneficial in the future, as much as we would like it now. The curriculum will probably end up providing us the best.

S4: Yeah, even if we don't like what we're learning it probably will benefit us later in life.

(SA3)

Overall, most of the students, even if they had some reservations, felt that they should be consulted in some way. With the initial structure of the *ACHistory* providing options amongst the depth studies, the possibility for teachers to consult with students about depth study topics was available. However, with some state-based adaptations of the curriculum removing the options of particular depth studies, this could be difficult to achieve in some states (SCSA, 2014; VCAA, n.d.b).

6.3 Media Commentary on the Development Process from 2014

A large amount of media commentary on the development of the *ACHistory* occurred prior to the period that articles used for triangulation were published. Media articles that were used for triangulation were published after 2013. From 2014, media articles commenting on aspects of the development of the curriculum focused for the most part on the results of the 2014 review, arguably a part of the development process.

It was reported that the attention the *ACHistory* initially received in the media, encouraged seemingly by politicians such as Christopher Pyne, generated a sense of controversy around the subject and eventually led to a fear of political intervention and the possible emergence of a next round of the culture wars (Ashenden, 2014; Taylor, 2014a; Taylor, 2014c). Such fears were most apparent in the media when the review was announced in 2014 soon after the Coalition was

voted into power (Bennet, 2014; Cullen, 2014). Concerns included that the *ACHistory* was at risk of being re-written with each change of government (Riordan & McIlroy, 14). Criticisms directed towards the development process alleged that the initial curriculum development was controlled by the Labor government (Donnelly, 2017; Crowe, 2014). This was rejected by at least one participant (HTAA). However, alleged control over the curriculum can perhaps be seen in later state adaptations of the curriculum in the comment provided by another participant (WA1T) who was unaware of any teachers in her personal circle who were involved in the consultation process. Further, the selection of the two reviewers in 2014, each from a conservative background, was also viewed by some as an exercise in alleged political control (Cullen, 2014; Bennet, 2014, Ashenden, 2014; Ireland, 2014).

In 2014, prior to the release of the *Review of the Australian Curriculum*, claims that the *ACHistory* was biased persisted (Daley, 2014). One criticism of the curriculum development process that was reported to have emerged after the 2014 review was the “[suggestion] that the ‘missing step’ in the development of the national curriculum was the failure to construct an ‘overarching framework,’ and that this led to the curriculum’s problems of coherence and bulk” (Ashenden, 2014).

Further, criticisms reported that a key design element of the Australian Curriculum, the ability for teachers to choose between depth study options, had resulted in “leaving students with a ‘piecemeal’ understanding of Australian history” and the fear that they would miss out on “seminal moments” (Balogh & Kelly, 2017). A final criticism that was reported in the media articles came from

one of the reviewers, Wiltshire, who was reported to have stated that "A school curriculum should be based on a set of values, yet it is almost impossible to determine what values have been explicitly used to design the proposed model," (Crowe, 2014). However, with the release of the review's findings, criticisms of the development process seemed to diminish and were not often apparent in the media articles after this time. The 2014 review will be discussed further in Chapter Eight. Overall, the criticisms found in the media were about the result of the development process rather than the process itself.

Media criticisms of the school History curriculum came surprisingly in 2017 and 2018 from the two Reviewers, Kenneth Wiltshire and Kevin Donnelly. Given that many of their recommendations were accepted by the Commonwealth Government (Department of Education, 2014c), it was surprising to find that their main concerns had not already been resolved to their satisfaction. Indeed, the lack of commentary criticising the curriculum following the initial criticism of the review itself, suggested that, at that time, the dispute over the Australian Curriculum more generally, and the *ACHistory* specifically, was no longer a large concern for either side, and that teachers would be allowed to begin implementing the curriculum in classrooms across Australia without calls for more changes at the national level.

In an article tellingly titled "School history curriculum teaches us to disparage our heritage", Wiltshire continued to criticise the *ACHistory* and even labelled it "very unbalanced and blatantly biased. Its prime focus is a never-ending selection of issues, almost all presented as negative elements of our history" (Wiltshire, 2017). This was, of course, unexpected in light of the results of the review and the

revision that was meant to have occurred, although it was noted in the final report that the two reviewers, Kenneth Wiltshire and Kevin Donnelly, did not always agree on a way forward (Department of Education, 2014a, 143-147).

The articles that appeared in *The Australian* in 2017 proved that the *ACHistory* and students' knowledge of Australian history was still a concern for conservative commentators. That this was seen, at least by some commentators, as a "battle" for the political allegiance of Australian school students seems apparent from a statement by Donnelly (2018) noting that "John Howard, when prime minister, referred to the battle of ideas as a key element of the contest between parties of different political persuasions". In light of this, there were appeals for the Commonwealth Government to "lock down" the curriculum and what is taught in History classes (Norington, 2017). Wiltshire, in particular, stated that Australian students were being "denied" the opportunity to learn about "the global march of civilisation" or gain "a comprehensive knowledge of their own nation's heritage" due to "flaws in the national history school curriculum, primarily because there is too much choice for teachers in what is to be taught" (Wiltshire, 2017). This choice was a deliberate feature of the *ACHistory*, intended to provide teachers with flexibility (National Curriculum Board, 2009a).

Once again, despite the 2014 review, claims that the *ACHistory* was "very unbalanced and blatantly biased" (Wiltshire, 2017) have been presented in the media. Donnelly (2018), for instance, pronounced in one article that "it is clear how successful the cultural left has been in taking control of the school curriculum and indoctrinating primary and secondary students with its ideological

world view". While participants in this study disagreed on a bias being present in the curriculum or which way that potential bias lent, this remains a criticism levelled at the *ACHistory* by conservative commentators, who feel that the curriculum lacks a focus on patriotism (Wiltshire, 2017).

The main point was that the issues the media were considering were different to the topics that the participants considered important in regards to the development process. None of the concerns of Wiltshire and Donnelly were expressed in school stakeholder views, with only the exception of one teacher participant (WA2) who agreed that there was a left-wing bias. While not all media articles criticised the results of the development process, claims of bias persisted, even, to a small extent, after the 2014 review.

6.4 The Academic View on the Development Process from 2014

Peer-reviewed academic articles on the development process for the *ACHistory* were not numerous during the period used for triangulation in comparison to the amount published earlier, with most articles related to the topic published prior to 2014.

Six months after the release of the 2014 review, as with media articles, peer-reviewed journal articles related to the development of the *ACHistory* seemed to dissipate. One suggestion for this could be related to the moral panics model, where after a solution is presented, the problem or issue fades away (Cricher, 2003). Another possible explanation is that once Pyne left the Education portfolio, the new Minister for Education, Simon Birmingham, was uninterested in pursuing the matter any further. As a result, there were less statements provided to the

media about the *ACHistory*, and, due to a lack of reporting, public interest in the matter also dwindled, causing both the media and academics to turn their attention elsewhere.

Prior to this, the *ACHistory* gained a lot of interest both from the media and academics during the development (curriculum shaping and writing) and early implementation phases. Writing about the controversy that occurred during this time of development, education historian, Grant Rodwell (2017b), pointed out that several controversies over the History taught in schools had occurred in countries other than Australia, such as the USA and the UK. In each of the controversies overseas, media interest was apparent, and Rodwell speculated that it was likely that those who developed the *ACHistory* would have been aware of the precedents set overseas (Rodwell, 2017b).

Rodwell (2017a), writing in 2017, connected the development of the *ACHistory* to the moral panic and “pressures for risk society imperatives” (2017a, 376) linked to the 2005 Cronulla race riots, a conflict in Sydney between Anglo-Australians and people of Middle Eastern appearance that occurred while Howard was still in government. While he believed that the development of the *ACHistory* was “inevitable” to some extent, he also felt that he could

state with some certainty that the moral panic surrounding the Cronulla riots brought about much bipartisan agreement on the need for an ACH, albeit, political elites and compliant school educational bureaucrats would determine the content of the curriculum. (376)

This comment demonstrates that despite the public consultation that occurred during the development of the *ACHistory* the content of the curriculum was considered, at least by some, to have been decided by bureaucrats rather than

school stakeholders like teachers, parents or History Teachers' Association members. This aligns somewhat to the comments made by two participants (HTASA, V1T).

In comparing the approaches of the Howard government to that of the Rudd and Gillard governments in developing a History curriculum, Peterson (2016) reflected that Rudd and Gillard

both avoided the sort of direct criticism of history education that characterised Howard's approach...Instead, Rudd and Gillard focused on the value of having common curricular content across Australian States and Territories as well as making general statements about the benefits for students of studying history at school, in particular the development of critical inquiry. (Peterson, 2016, 865)

This approach meant that the focus in public statements during the Rudd and Gillard years was not on what students should be taught, so much as the value of students learning from a common curriculum. One suggestion for why Rudd and Gillard chose to take this particular approach to developing the *ACHistory* was suggested by policy sociologists, Savage and O'Connor (2017, 617) who stated that

The development of the Australian Curriculum was framed from the outset as a cooperative and consultative approach in an attempt to distance it from the divisions that had characterised earlier attempts at centralisation in the 1990s (Savage & O'Connor, 2015, 617)

Savage and O'Connor (2015, 625), suggested that in comparison to the USA,

In Australia, the role of philanthropic organisations, corporations and think tanks has been significantly less pronounced in the development of national curriculum reform. This is largely because Australia lacks the same historical tradition of corporate, philanthropic and think-tank involvement in public policy. (625)

However, these groups did still have some influence on education policy and their inclusion in some of the consultations was questioned by two participants (HTAWA, SA3T).

6.5 Summary

A range of stakeholder groups were involved in the development process of the *ACHistory* through an extensive consultation process. While there were opportunities for school stakeholders to be involved in this process not all chose to make use of this opportunity or in some case were not aware that the opportunity existed. The feelings of participants in relation to the development process varied, regardless of whether they had taken part in consultation or not.

In the media the focus on content as the result of the development process emerged rather than the process itself emerged. The curriculum document as an outcome of the development process was also often a source of critique among academic commentators, with some authors criticising the content contained within the *ACHistory* document as well as the structure.

This focus on curriculum content displayed some concerns about potential bias in the content of the *ACHistory* amongst some commentators. The attention the *ACHistory* received at this stage, in both the media and amongst academics, generated a sense of controversy around the subject and eventually led to a fear of political intervention particularly in relation to the announcement of the review into the Australian Curriculum in 2014. This demonstrated a potential lack of confidence in the development process that was established by ACARA. This lack of confidence also seemed to be apparent in the responses of some parents and

teachers, particularly those who had not been involved personally in the consultation process themselves.

The feelings of the participants were similar to those expressed by academics and media articles where there was a broad range of views expressed. Overall, there seemed to be a general acceptance that considering the requirement to balance the needs of multiple stakeholder groups from each state and territory against each other, the *ACHistory* and the process used to develop it were, for the most part, considered adequate. This feeling that the curriculum development process and its outcome were acceptable was visible in the responses given by participants from the History Teachers' Associations. While there were varying responses about how thorough the development process was, the school based participants generally seemed to view the process as acceptable, in that it had given them a curriculum they could work with.

There is perhaps a disconnect between the initial aims of ACARA in terms of providing plenty of opportunities for consultation and the way the process was viewed by the participants who had not been involved in the process. ACARA's view that the process was "extensive and consultative" is not reflected for the most part in the views of the school stakeholders, with the exception of History Teachers' Association participants and those teachers who were involved in the process. A lack of information about opportunities to participate in the process of developing the *ACHistory* may have fostered this view. This is not to say that information was not available at the time, but that participants themselves were not necessarily informed and this had coloured their perceptions on the process.

One finding that emerged through speaking with the teachers was not only the range of views, but that these views seemed to depend not only on their level of participation in the development process and their years of teaching experience, but also on their views about the balance of power between the states and Commonwealth governments.

The participants involved in this project would have liked to see members from school stakeholder groups, such as parents, teachers, and students, be more involved in consultation regarding curriculum matters, but generally they recognised that there were multiple perspectives and desires from different groups to balance when constructing a curriculum. However, while this complexity of balancing the wants of different groups was recognised by some participants, many felt that their suggestions, or suggestions from their peers and colleagues, for the *ACHistory* were only taken on board to a partial extent and might not have been given the weight they deserved in the final version of the curriculum. One final concern that was apparent amongst some participants was the possibility that states would change or adapt the curriculum and what this meant for the concept of a national curriculum going forwards.

The next chapter examines the types of history participants viewed as important, how the inclusion of Australian history in the curriculum is viewed, the issues surrounding different perspectives on the national story, and the extent to which the topic was covered in the curriculum.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE TREATMENT OF AUSTRALIAN HISTORY IN THE CURRICULUM

7.1 Introduction

While the *Australian Curriculum: History (ACHistory)* took a world history approach, much of the controversy about the curriculum centred on the treatment of Australian history. Australian history and the way it was presented were divisive issues, not just in terms of the *ACHistory*, but due to the story that was depicted of Australia's past in the wider community. Recent calls for a change of date for Australia Day (Pobjie, 2017) highlight the persistent strong feelings on both sides when it comes to depictions of Australia's past as either one centred around invasion or, instead, the colonial struggle against the bush. Australian history and the way it was presented in the *ACHistory* was a contested area, particularly when it came to the amount taught, when it was taught (which year levels), and most importantly, whose history was taught. The contest over which perspective on Australia's national story was taught to students was very much evident in the public reception which the *ACHistory* received. However, which 'side' to teach was only one issue surrounding the teaching of Australian history under a national curriculum with issues such as student engagement, the amount of Australian history taught, and the differing histories amongst the states and territories also to contend with. This chapter looks first at the types of history that participants felt should be taught, before examining the controversy surrounding

the handling of Australian history in the curriculum, and the views of school stakeholders on the importance of Australian history, its relevance, and how it is treated in the curriculum.

7.2 What History Should be Taught? School Stakeholder Views

As already stated, the *ACHistory* has taken a world history approach, which has meant that it encompasses the teaching of Asian, European, American and some African history, not just Australian history. The *Shape of the Australian Curriculum: History* (2009a) paper and the *ACHistory* rationale (ACARA, 2015a) argued that this approach was the best way to give students an understanding of Australia's role in the world. One question posed to parent and student participants in this study concerned what history they felt should be taught in schools. Teacher and History Teachers' Association members were not specifically asked this question, although their preferences could at times be seen in their responses to other questions. Parent and student participants listed a range of history they found important, but Australian history was almost always included in their list. The importance that participants placed on Australian history was also re-enforced in the way they responded to later questions.

The history that participants believed deserved to be studied was broad and reflected the values and interest of the participants. Several students, for instance, listed Japanese and American history as topics they would like to study, mainly because they wanted to travel to these places after school. For instance, one group (WA3) explained that it was important to know about other countries' history when they travelled.

C: Was there any reason why you think you should learn about World War II or America and those sorts of places?

S2: Well, we shouldn't just be learning about Australian history, we need to know stuff about other countries too.

S1: Yeah, like when we travel. (WA3)

This view was shared by students (SA1), in South Australia, although they were interested in visiting Japan instead, possibly because they were studying Japanese as a subject.

A summary of the history that students and parents felt should be studied are listed in two tables below. These responses often mentioned history topics alongside particular histories.

Table 7.1: Students views on the history they felt was important

Student Focus Group	History participants felt was important for them to learn
V1	The Holocaust, Australian history, World Wars
SA1	Japanese, Australian history
SA2	Australian history, a mix of other countries
SA3	Aboriginal history, Civil rights, World War II
SA4	Civil rights, Child soldiers
SA5	Political history, Roman Democracy, things that are relevant to Australia
WA1	Australian history, Migration, Indigenous history
WA2	Australian history, Indigenous history

WA3	American history, World War II, 9/11
Summary: World history: 6; Australian history: 6; Indigenous history: 3; Other: 7	

Table 7.2: Parent views on the history they felt was important

Parent	History participants felt was important for their children to learn
SA2P	World history, Australian history
SA3P1	Australian history, European history, American history
SA3P2	World history
SA3P3	Australian, Asian, European, South Australian history
SA4P	Australian history, World history
WA1P	Australian history, Indigenous history, Western Australian history
WA2P	Biblical & Church history, Australian history, World Wars
Summary: World history: 3; Australian history: 6; State history: 2; Indigenous history: 1; Other: 6	

While not universal amongst participants, many felt that Australian history was an important area of study. Not all student focus groups listed Australian history as an important topic to study, with three groups listing other topics they considered to be important and interesting. Amongst the parents, only one did not list Australian history as an important topic for school study. The reason for this opinion appeared to be the parent's own schooling.

C: And how important do you believe it is for kids to study History at school?

I think it's important if they are gaining a global understanding of history...I found at school I studied too much Aboriginal history and Australian colonial history and I thought it was quite narrow and now they are looking globally and through the history periods, which I think is far more structured and important to them, because I have a belief that history repeats itself in different formats. (SA3 P2)

World history or the history of other countries was mentioned six times by the student groups and three times by the parents. There seemed to be a view, at least amongst some participants, that a focus solely on Australian history was too narrow and that students needed to have an understanding of the world. This demonstrated that these participants were in agreement with the approach taken by the *ACHistory* to provide a world history course, as the context in which Australian history would be studied. When asked, "How important do you think a world history approach in the curriculum is?" one teacher replied,

I actually think very important. Whilst we had a focus on Australia in the world...I think it is important simply because you've got to have that global perspective. Even when I first got into teaching 20 years ago, we were talking about global perspectives back then and the rise of Asia. So, I think in the modern world it is certainly important to know the history of more than where you are at. (WA3T)

Whilst there was a disagreement about what exactly the *ACHistory* should concentrate on, with some participants finding the curriculum too European, Asian or Australian focused, in general there seemed to be support for the studying of Australian history in a world context. This is further discussed later in the chapter. However, even while Australian history was recognised as the history that should be studied in Australian schools, even a number of those who saw it as important, complained that at times it was too repetitive or that it was given too great an emphasis in the *ACHistory*. It should also be noted that two parents, one

in South Australia and one in Western Australia, wanted their state's history to be studied.

7.3 How Much Australian History?

The teaching of History in Australian schools, was generally viewed as important by the participants in this study, although the reasons behind this valuation varied. The importance of national history was also apparent. This view, that Australian history was important, was illustrated not just by the focus in the media or comments by politicians on the content of the curriculum that related specifically to Australian history, but also through the views expressed by parents, teachers and students alike. As one parent put it, in her view the “number one priority is Australian history” (SA3P1). Many of the purposes behind teaching History in schools, which were examined in Chapter Five, linked back to the promotion of national history. They related to Australia as a nation and the important role History plays in nation building, by fostering a sense of national unity, national identification and democratic responsibility amongst students.

Despite the acknowledged importance of Australian history, it is in fact just one component of the *ACHistory*. Those writing the *ACHistory* deliberately adopted a world perspective to “ensure that learning opportunities allow for relevant national and global connections to be made to personal, family and local history across all years of schooling” (National Curriculum Board, 2009a, 7) and included History units that examine the past in various places around the globe as an integral part of the curriculum. The teaching of Australian history was a contentious area.

7.3.1 Participants' Views on the Inclusion of Australian History

The amount of Australian history included in the *ACHistory* and the challenge of engaging students in this area of History was one issue discussed with school stakeholders. Participants were asked for their opinions about the amount of Australian history included in the *ACHistory*. A brief overview of their responses is listed below, as responses were often extended participants' responses have been paraphrased in tables.

Students in focus group sessions were asked “What is your opinion about the amount you learn about Australian history at school?”

Table 7.3: Student responses to “What is your opinion about the amount you learn about Australian history at school?”

Student Group	Focus	Paraphrased responses to: “What is your opinion about the amount you learn about Australian history at school?”
SA1		The amount is reasonable.
SA2		Not enough.
SA3		Mixed. Two students felt there was too much. Two students wanted to learn more.
SA4		Too much.
SA5		Too much.
WA1		N/A. This group was not asked this question.
WA2		Not enough. Year 10 was the first year they recalled studying Australian topics in high school
WA3		Too much.
V1		Not enough. Should learn more.
Summary		Too much: 3; Not enough: 3; The right amount: 1; Mixed: 1

Teacher participants were asked “Do you think Australian history is covered in enough depth in the Australian Curriculum?”

Table 7.4: Teacher responses to “Do you think Australian history is covered in enough depth in the Australian Curriculum?”

Teacher	Paraphrased response to: “Do you think Australian history is covered in enough depth in the Australian Curriculum?”
SA1T	Yes. They can't please everyone, but have done a pretty good job.
SA2T	Not enough depth. It touches on it in Year 8 & 9, but it's only marginal.
SA3T	Very well balanced and absolutely covered in the right depth.
SA4T	Yes, I do actually. I like how it's sequential too from Reception all the way through.
SA5T	Yes. There's probably too much of it.
WA1T	No. There is no Australian history in WACE. 7-10 only covers some.
WA2T	Yes and no in different areas. My biggest concern with the Australia Curriculum is it is more thematic rather than following a timeline.
WA3T	At [school] I think, yes. We historically have had a fairly traditional curriculum if you want to call it that.
V1	Yes, I think a lot of the topics tried to take an Australian perspective. I think it's hard to engage kids with Australian history.
Summary	No: 2; Yes: 6; Other: 1

Parents were not asked about their views on the amount of Australian history taught, however, many provided their opinions unprompted. These opinions often emerged when parents were asked about the history they believed their children should be studying in school.

Finally, while History Teachers' Association members, like parents, were not specifically asked their views on the inclusion on Australian history, they too generally did provide their opinions on the topic. One History Teachers' Association member explained,

The part that I had, at the time, reservations about is the [Year] 9, 10, which deals with Australia...it's difficult to see how coherence can be achieved and Australian history is difficult; it's on the nose with the kids...Time will tell...how successful that can be for teachers who deal with a lot, inevitably in a small amount of time. (HTAA)

When Australian history was covered in the *ACHistory* was not the only concern; the amount and the depth of the treatment the subject was given were also issues to consider. The depth that Australian history was covered in the *ACHistory* was, however, proved to be one of those areas that teachers in this study tended to believe was adequately covered already. Of the nine teachers interviewed six were satisfied with the coverage Australian history received. One teacher even felt that while “It’s got its place. There’s probably too much of it. I think it’s probably too much Australian history” (SA5T). In contrast, when asked about the coverage of Australian history, another teacher stated outright that he believed Australian history was not covered in enough depth.

No, I don’t think it is [covered in enough depth], because in the curriculum now you are given a selection of topics that you can teach. So...the head of your faculty decides, in consultation with the teachers, as to what will be taught in each of the year levels. So, some years ago Australian history was part of Year 10 curriculum, now it’s become Australian Curriculum that’s been eliminated and I don’t, I personally don’t think, there’s enough Australian history at all taught. It does touch on it in some aspects in Year 8 and Year 9, however, it’s only marginal. (SA2T)

These two contrasting views showed that there was not a consensus on the amount of Australian history included.

As this second teacher (SA2T) pointed out, with the choices available under the *ACHistory* it was possible for schools to select the depth studies that they believed would most interest their student cohort or that the school had the most available resources to teach. While this is useful for tailoring courses to the interest of students, it can mean that, given the option, depth studies that focus more heavily on Australian aspects of history can be cast aside in favour of other topics.

As noted already, this was one concern raised by those who advocated for the 2014 *Review of the Australian Curriculum*. Disappointment about the amount of Australian history taught was apparent not only with those who were advocating for the 2014 review. With changes occurring to the implemented curriculum in individual states, some participants were happier than others with the amount of Australian history included. A desire for a greater depth of Australian history at the secondary level appeared in interviews with participants from Western Australia, who were at the time transitioning to the Western Australian Curriculum.

The Australian Curriculum is more diverse than the Western Australian Curriculum. We've actually got very little Australian history, other than history around wars, and you know, we've lost some in high schools, we've lost all the Australian stuff except for around wars just about. (HTAWA)

The view that the curriculum content of Australian history had declined in Western Australia also emerged in an interview with a Western Australian teacher who initially stated that "There is no Australian history" (WA1T). She later clarified that in the *ACHistory*, as opposed to the Western Australian Curriculum, there was "some Australian history in lower school curriculum, so 7, 8, 9, 10. Not a lot though" (WA1T).

Another teacher who expressed some level of discontent with the depth of Australian history covered in the curriculum, was concerned primarily with the way it was presented in the curriculum through themes. This Western Australian teacher was teaching from the *ACHistory* at the time he was interviewed, so his response in this case is specific to the Australian Curriculum, not the Western Australian Curriculum.

Yes and no. Some areas yes, some areas no. My biggest concern with the Australia Curriculum is it is more thematic rather than following a timeline. You get little topics like Rights and Freedoms in Year 10, and somewhere in the process you lose the storyline. Kids don't always get the storyline. How it all fits together is missing. (WA2T)

This was an issue noted in the 2014 review, with the focus on themes rather than a conceptual narrative being highlighted as one area of concern in the curriculum (Department of Education, 2014a).

The remaining six teachers, who came from South Australia, Victoria and Western Australia, were generally happy with the depth that Australian history was presented in the *ACHistory*. One teacher explained that, in his view, the problem was not with the curriculum but in the way other people read the document.

I think it's been very well balanced and it's absolutely covered in the right depth. The problem comes if people misinterpret what they're reading. So, the depth is a guideline, it's indicative in the Australian Curriculum, it can be interpreted quite broadly with a lot of freedom. So, I think people who are having trouble, thinking it's either too much or too little, are misreading the document and its intent. (SA3T)

This is similar to the comments of one History Teachers' Association member who stated that

curriculum is not about words, it's about the ideas and the things that you're trying to teach kids. So, if you're going through and counting how many times the words 'labour' or 'union' or whatever is mentioned then you're actually missing the whole point of what's written down. (HTAWA)

As another teacher surmised “history is one of those things where you can’t please everyone or cover everything” (SA1T). Students, were one group that were perhaps hard to please, with one teacher reporting that when Australian history topics, such as the Settlement of Australia, the Gold Rush or even World War I were taught in class, “the kids can’t stand it. They say ‘we’ve done this, we’ve done this’. So, you’ve got to get really creative” (V1T). That some students were bored by Australian history and felt that they had covered it in more than enough depth also emerged in focus groups with students.

While there have been calls for a greater inclusion of Australian history in the *ACHistory*, there were mixed responses from students about Australian history and the amount Australian was covered in the curriculum. Most students when asked about what type of history they believed they should learn, listed Australian history as they felt they should know about the place where they lived. While Australian history was seen as important by most students and a topic they “should” learn about because they lived in Australia, quite a few students explained that they found Australian history boring and felt they had covered everything already multiple times. Australian history was one of the large themes that emerged in all focus groups, not only due to the line of questioning. Australian history made both the “like” and “dislike” lists amongst students when they were asked about their opinions on History at the start of focus group sessions.

The amount of Australian history (as opposed to other types of history) taught is another concern in relation to the *ACHistory*. Some students said that they found the amount of Australian history they were taught to be excessive. Most

Australian history and local history topics were taught in the primary years, with remaining Australian history topics, or topics that contain elements of Australian history, such as the World Wars, Rights and Freedoms, Popular Culture, and Immigration taught in Years 9 and 10. These topics varied between the three states examined in this study with Popular Culture, for instance, not an option for classes in Western Australia (SCSA, 2014).

Sadly, students in some focus groups (WA3, SA3, SA4, SA5) described Australian history as “boring” or said that they wished the amount they studied could be reduced. One student explained that in her opinion, “We need to learn less about it, I think. I mean, it’s okay that they teach us about it, but maybe add things together and don’t teach us too much detail because it kind of gets boring” (WA3). This opinion was shared by a student in a South Australian focus group (SA4).

Students in two groups (SA2, SA3) were split between students who felt that they had learnt enough Australia history and those who felt that they had not learnt very much Australian history until Year 10. One student (SA2) when asked about the amount they had learnt, replied “No more”, however two others in this group believed they had not learnt enough yet. Students in one group (SA3) explained that they were split between those who had learnt a lot about Australian history in primary school and those who had not. This suggests that the treatment of Australian history in primary school, where the area is first covered, for each group of students had influenced their views on the subject going into high school.

In contrast to those who found Australian history boring, students in three other schools (V1, WA1, WA2) viewed Australian history as important. One group explained that they thought it was important to know about their own country and “what makes Australia like Australia today” (WA 1). Students in a Victorian school (V1) agreed with this sentiment, as they felt that Australian history was important as that is “where we live” and they should know how the country got to where it is today. They felt that there should be more Australian history included in the curriculum as they felt that they did not know enough. This suggests that the amount of Australian history covered varied between schools; this situation may have been a result of previous state-based curriculums that these students would have been taught, while in primary school.

Students in one Western Australia school (WA2) connected the importance of learning about Australian history with future careers. Since it was more likely they would all get jobs in Australia rather than overseas, it was important to learn about Australia. They also felt that their current Year 10 study was the first time that they had learnt about Australian history in high school. Overall, regardless of whether they enjoyed it or not, the verdict from students seemed to be that Australian history deserved a place in the *ACHistory*.

This view was also shared by parents and teachers, although the extent to which it was valued did vary. When asked which type of history he believed students should study, one parent provided a very similar answer to that of student groups:

Australian history, because we live in Australia. I think that kids should learn that. The war history, because it still affects us in a lot of ways in Australia and we were involved in lots so that definitely should be part of it. (WA2P).

The view that learning about Australia's past would help students to understand Australian society today emerged in the focus groups and interviews, when participants were able to articulate why they believed the study of Australian history was vital. This understanding was seen as important for allowing students to function in society in later life. Like the students in the previous student group mentioned, one parent described the value of history to Australian society and students' potential career opportunities.

C: So how important do you think it is for students to study history at school?

Incredibly important. I wish it was compulsory until Year 12...there's so much context to our modern lives and the way that Australian society is now operating and without that understanding of history and society, particularly seeing how societies have worked in previous centuries, you get very little understanding of why Australia is as it is today, and I also think that history gives great context to all sorts of careers. (SA3P3)

The emphasis on the importance of Australian history for those who lived in Australia seems apparent to most; however, what was less agreed upon was the type of Australian history that was most important. Having one overarching national story was not something that was agreed upon. The influence of the "history wars", as discussed in Chapter Three, can be seen in the controversy over the release of the *ACHistory*, the focus on Australian history, and the eventual 2014 review. Part of the debate here was the emphasis on which different aspects of Australian history were included in the curriculum. This influence extended into some of the discussion over the types of Australian history it was most important for students to study. As one parent stated: "I think world history is important. I think Australian history is also important as well." (SA2P). The

opportunity to study both of these does fortunately exist in scope of the *ACHistory*, as will be discussed in 7.4.

7.3.2 Opinions on the Inclusion of Australian History in the Media and Academic Writing

Criticisms about the lack of prominence given to Australian history in the *ACHistory* could be seen as a reaction by conservative politicians to teaching “approaches that placed particular emphasis on skills” (Peterson, 2015, 10). As such, a preoccupation with a “correct” national narrative was connected by some peer-reviewed articles (Peterson, 2015; Martin, 2016) to the debate over teaching approaches, transmission or constructivism, which was discussed in Chapter Two.

One peer-reviewed article commented that Christopher Pyne’s calls for increased attention for Anzac Day, was significant in that “not only the focus on which aspects of the national historical narrative should be most prominent but also that the suggested point of emphasis [was] the type of national celebration” (Martin, 2016, 8). The argument was that Anzac Day, and this aspect of the Australian narrative, should be given prominence over other “days” such as Harmony or Reconciliation Day (Maadad & Rodwell, 2016, 93). Maadad & Rodwell, in a comparison of the History curricula in Lebanon and Australia, concluded that despite demands for a greater inclusion of Australian history, “Australian students and teachers [were] not being denied historical content; it remain[ed] highly accessible. The content in question [was] simply a matter of emphasis, accompanying a downplaying of the importance of ANZAC Day in the Australian national identity” (Maadad & Rodwell, 2016, 95). Overall, the demands for a greater emphasis on aspects of Australian history were not supported by the peer-

reviewed academic articles used for triangulation. However, this was not the case in the media articles.

Although Australian history did not constitute the entire *ACHistory*, it did seem to generate the most discussion in the media. In one article Coalition politician, Christopher Pyne commented that the initial *ACHistory* “failed [to recognise] the legacy of Western civilisation and [did not give] important events in Australia's history and culture the prominence they deserve” (Pyne, 2014b). An example of the importance that Australian history was given in the media was the statement that, “Most Australians are aware that studying our nation's history is an important way of learning about the people, events and ideas that have helped to shape us” (McCormack, 2015, 8). One article that appeared in *The Australian* in 2017 demonstrated that the *ACHistory* and students’ knowledge of Australian history remained a concern for one conservative commentator. Wiltshire (2017), one of the 2014 reviewers, stated in the article that Australian students were being “denied” the opportunity to gain “a comprehensive knowledge of their own nation’s heritage” due to “flaws in the national history school curriculum, primarily because there is too much choice for teachers in what is to be taught”. He complained that this choice could lead to teachers avoiding “whole slabs of Australian history” (Wiltshire, 2017).

This media debate on Australian history in schools, prior to 2014, was the topic of an article by one academic (Collins, 2013) who concluded that

The dynamics of public discourse and the subject of history education are perpetually linked through force of circumstance in the relationship between politics and history; primarily, this relationship exists in the enmeshment of the distinctive human behaviour of representing and assessing the past with

the distinctive human behaviour of holding and promoting preferred forms of good. (Collins, 2013, 21)

This seemed to be true too of the media articles used for triangulation. Australian history, the type of narrative told, and the extent to which it was adequately covered in schools was considered a priority by many (Wiltshire, 2017; McCormack, 2015; Pyne, 2014b). For some of the articles just discussed, the amount taught should, in their view, be increased. However, while this view existed amongst those not directly involved with teaching History, the inclusion of Australian history and its reception from students was one issue that worried those responsible for enacting the curriculum, the teacher participants in this study.

7.4 Australian History in a World Context

The initial *Shape of the Australian Curriculum: History* paper released by the National Curriculum Board (2009) proposed that Australian history should be taught within a world history context. The reason for this was to allow students to gain an understanding of Australia's role in the broader context of the world. The rationale for History stated that "An understanding of world history enhances students' appreciation of Australian history" (ACARA, 2015a). Through a world history perspective, students would gain a greater understanding of Australian history as they were introduced to the similarities and differences in the histories of nations in other parts of the world, in comparison to their own nation (Henderson, 2012). The move to a world history approach also enabled the incorporation of Asian history in the expectation that the forces of globalisation would increase Australia's interactions with this part of the world in the future (Henderson, 2012).

7.4.1 Participants' Responses to the World Context of the *Australian Curriculum: History*

The idea of teaching Australian history through a world history context was supported by eight out of the nine teachers interviewed in this study. Their responses are summarised below.

Table 7.5: Teacher responses to “How important do you think a world history approach is?”

Teacher	Paraphrased response to: “How important do you think a world history approach is?”
SA1T	Yes, important. Good to compare mistakes and perspectives.
SA2T	It is important to look at our roots and where our ancestors came from.
SA3T	Critically important. You can't understand Australia without putting it into a global perspective.
SA4T	Yeah, I think it's very important. A lot of the kids don't have that knowledge about how the world works.
SA5T	It is too Euro-centric. There are options which is an improvement on the old SACSA framework that used to be there before.
WA1T	World approach is good, but Australia needs to be in there somewhere.
WA2T	World history is important, we need a big picture rather than just one country.
WA3T	I actually think very important. You've got to have that global perspective.
V1	I think it's pretty important. I think we live in a global society.

Summary	World context is important: 8; Other: 1
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The only teacher who disagreed, instead shared his concern that the curriculum as it stood was too Euro-centric (SA5T). The other teachers seemed to view the world history approach as important, with one even labelling it “critically” important.

C: How important do you think a world history approach is?

Critically important. You can’t understand Australia without putting it into a global perspective and our students are living in a global vision anyway. Our kids are very well connected to the rest of the world. They travel a lot. They know about it. And Australia is not unique, most of what has happened in Australia has got strong echoes elsewhere and putting them in context makes them appear as though we are part of a broad trend rather than individual. Indigenous studies is a good example. That’s a core part of Year 10, but unless you really look at that in comparison to say South Africa or the United States or a whole range of other countries you don’t get the true story. (SA3T)

While all parents were supportive of at least some Australian history being included in the *ACHistory*, not all were concerned with it being taught through a world history context. However, four parent participants did identify global history as something they felt was “very” important in their views. One parent stated that “any knowledge is good” and that students should learn “probably a little bit about everything” as Australia is now a multicultural country (SA4P). Other parents expanded upon their belief that world history was important by explaining that world history could help their children to understand Australian history. When asked how important a world history context was, another parent replied:

Very important. Australia is nation made up of immigrants from different countries. I think a lot of the resistance to the boat people coming in is that parents and children don't understand the history of where they are coming from and why they are being forced to leave the country...World history impacts on Australian history, if it wasn't for America and England, Australia and New Zealand would never have been involved with World War I and II. Most of them don't really know, apart from Anzac Day, they don't really know what part Australia and New Zealand played in World War I and II. (WA1P)

Comments such as these are in agreement with the stance maintained in the rationale for the *ACHistory* that a world context allows students to better understand Australian society and its place within an increasingly globalised world. As the rationale states, "An understanding of world history enhances students' appreciation of Australian history" (ACARA, 2015a). Another parent explained that she felt her own schooling had focused too heavily on Indigenous and colonial history and believed that a global approach provided history courses with more structure.

I think it's important if they are gaining a global understanding of history...I found at school I studied too much Aboriginal history and Australian colonial history and I thought it was quite narrow and now they are looking globally and through the history periods, which I think is far more structured and important to them, because I have a belief that history repeats itself in different formats. (SA3P2)

This parent was also concerned that the focus on Asian history had the potential to narrow the curriculum and potentially disadvantage students, if predictions about the importance of Asia in future decades proved to be inaccurate. As the parent explained,

I think [the curriculum] should be broad and I worry that they are getting too focused...I'm worried that they are getting too focused on the Asian areas. I think they are feeling as though the world is going to gravitate or Asia is going to spread across the world, and the world, we have to

gravitate to an Asian culture, but I wonder if that's going to change over time to be more European. (SA3P2)

A History curriculum that looked at a broad range of content was favoured by this parent. For another parent from the same school community Australian history through a world context was considered important as she hoped that her child would not reside in the same city for his entire life. This comment came when the parent was asked about her views on Australia having a national curriculum.

C: So how do you feel about the idea of a national curriculum?

Well, for us it would have been great, because then our son would have moved schools with a smooth transition. So, I think yes, there does have to be some standardisation, but I would question if there's not been an assessment of what is happening in schools in other countries, how valuable it is. If children here want to go and study abroad it would make it harder for them. I guess that's why they have all these international schools.

C: So, you're very big on a global focus?

Yeah, I think it's important.

C: Do you see your son moving overseas in the future?

Well, he's not sure what he wants to do, but I wouldn't take that out of his options. He talks about it. I certainly don't want him spending the rest of his life in Adelaide.

(SA3P2)

Her statement was in contrast to the views of some other participants, from all school stakeholder groups, who preferred a focus, or at least a larger inclusion, of local state history.

7.4.2 Opinions on a World Context in the Media and in Academic Writing

The use of a world approach in the *ACHistory* was often not mentioned in the media articles used as triangulation in this study (for the full list see Appendix C, Table 1). Moreover, the few views expressed were diverse and even contradictory.

Some articles, as discussed previously, did complain about, or report on complaints about, not enough Australian history being included in the curriculum (Wiltshire, 2017; Norington, 2017; Hurst, 2014). Alternatively, one media article acknowledged that “the current Australian Curriculum and its state-specific predecessors were very narrow in terms of global scope” (Koelma, 2014a). It argued that if certain world history topics, such as 9/11, were not covered in the years that History was a compulsory subject, then it was possible that students would leave school without ever learning about these world events. As incidents such as 9/11 in the USA or the Tiananmen Square massacre in China have had an impact both globally and in Australia these were considered, by one article, important topics that students were not given the opportunity to understand (Koelma, 2014a). The same article held the opinion that

while not every historical moment in the 20th century can be included in the compulsory Year 9 and 10 history curriculum, perhaps the government and curriculum boards need to reconsider the overwhelming inclusion of Australian history at the expense of modern world history. (Koelma, 2014a)

This aligns with what some of the school stakeholders who participated in this study believed, with many, although not all, participants agreeing that a world approach was important.

The adoption of a world history approach in the *ACHistory* was further considered important by another article as

Students need to be able to ask why things are historically significant to certain people at certain times. They need to understand the past from their position in the world, as well as different perspectives in relation to their own cultural identities...To be successful in learning about history, it's crucial students understand world history... (Cairns, 2018)

In contrast, other media articles called for a greater inclusion of Australian history (Wiltshire, 2017; Norington, 2017; Hurst, 2014). These articles included complaints from Christopher Pyne that the *ACHistory* “contain[ed] too much Asia and Aborigines and not enough Anzac Day and business stories” (MacCullum, 2014).

In contrast to media articles used as data in this study, the other data used for triangulation, the peer-reviewed articles, tended to acknowledge the world history approach adopted by the *ACHistory* (Joel, 2017; Sharp, 2015; Martin, 2016; Peterson, 2016). Sharp’s (2015) article seemed supportive of the world history context as it suggested the discussion of events in world history to help students develop as active citizens.

There were some criticisms of the world history approach, but this was mainly due to the large range of content that the *ACHistory* included.

In the case of History, the incredibly wide-reaching scope of the content to be covered attempts to locate Australian history within a broader context of world history stretching back thousands of years. Consequently, the curriculum...has been criticised in some quarters as being far too broad (Joel, 2017)

This world history focus perhaps does not leave much room for a more local focus.

7.5 Local History v National History

Although there are multiple perspectives on Australian history and how it can be viewed, there are also different views on Australian history that are related to the varying origins of the different states and territories that make up Australia. One issue that was raised by individual participants from all school stakeholder groups

was the issue of local history and its role in history education. Prior to Federation in 1901, Australia consisted of separate colonies, each with its own origins and early histories, which shaped the states and their cultures in distinctive ways. This difference in state origins was one issue surrounding the development of “one national story” and was an important consideration for some participants when discussing the development of the *ACHistory*. Participants were not asked a specific question relating to local history, but the topic arose in discussions with seven participants. The following response by one South Australian teacher demonstrates this consideration of state differences and the importance he placed on these early variations in origins.

I think [the *ACHistory*] could be determined by each state on a historical basis, because each state is founded in a different manner. For example, South Australia’s not founded on convict settlement, but on the sale of land by Wakefield. So, looking at it from a state situation where South Australia is completely different, maybe the historical foundation of South Australia could be different from that of Victoria, New South Wales, Western Australia, even Tasmania. (SA2T)

With the *ACHistory* document, the focus, particularly in secondary years, is on Australian national history rather than that of individual states. There is some room for teachers to incorporate local history, not just in primary years, but, as one teacher (SA5T) lamented, this opportunity was not always taken up by individual teachers.

...there’s nothing really local. There’s no opportunity to get stuck into South Australian history. I mean, there is, but it’s not outlined; it’s not in the content so a lot of teachers ...don’t look. You could investigate local history, there is the option there, but it’s not very clear to teachers and I think [the opportunities] could be made [clear]. Yeah, I think the curriculum could allow for more local context, it could be put into a local context so you could look at [local area’s] history and then compare it to national

history or another country...Teachers don't see that when they read the curriculum. (SA 5T)

As a result of these opportunities not being clearly outlined, or taken up by teachers, there was some concern amongst some parents, teachers and, even from one History Teachers' Association member, that local or state-based history had been "lost" in the move to a national curriculum (HTAWA).

This sense of loss in the move to the Australian Curriculum was not apparent in the responses from all participants, in fact most did not mention local history at all, but for those who saw it as a concern, the lack of local or state history seemed to be an area they felt was lacking, particularly for secondary students. The reason behind some of the concern about a lack of local and state-based history content in favour of national content, was evident in the response from one Western Australian teacher who saw the teaching of state history as an opportunity to encourage her students to feel connected to and a part of their local community.

The amount of people that were upset about Australian history, all of the Western Australian history has been removed, they're really upset about it, because there are so many things you can do with kids to allow them to make a connection between themselves and their community and that's been completely removed, so it's just a textbook thing. (WA1T)

Interestingly, another Western Australian teacher specified that one of his most successful History units included local history as it allowed the students to engage with the topic. He stated that "The most success [he'd] had [was] with a local history project. It doesn't fit with the Australian Curriculum, but it connects with the kids" (WA2T).

Likewise, one parent viewed the study of her state's history as an opportunity for students not only to connect with their state, but also to develop a sense of "pride" in their local state and felt it was an area that had been neglected in the *ACHistory*.

In recent years I've sort of become... much more interested in Australian and South Australian history and I am always disappointed that we don't have a greater emphasis on South Australian history. I think most kids would know the basics, you know, when South Australia was colonised and they might even know that South Australia was the first place to give women the vote and allow women to stand for parliament... But you know, there are so many great historical figures in South Australia that no one knows about. It would be just so easy to...go on field trips...hop on a bus and then go study these historical figures and have pride in the state... I think that's an area that's lacking all the way through, not just to Year 12. (SA3P3)

However, while the lack of state-based and local history opportunities in the secondary curriculum was identified by these particular participants as an area that was lacking in the curriculum, all still regarded Australian history as an important area for students to study. Indeed, in the move to a national curriculum, the aim that students should identify with Australian history more broadly rather than with state history is perhaps at work, particularly when considering that many students may move from their state of origin for work in later life.

While the other participants who raised the issue of local or state history were disappointed it did not have a greater presence in the curriculum, one parent held a slightly different view. This parent, for instance, held a dislike for the state system in Australia in general and the great variations she saw in the different

state schooling systems, but did see the value of integrating state history into the curriculum.

Australia is one country, why so many variances in curriculum? They should be learning the same sort of thing, then with individual state stuff brought into that. So, they can do state history, but they'll all be doing their own state history. Because everything else should be across the board anyway, the reading, writing, telling the time. All of that stuff. (WA1P)

Her concern about uniformity in the curriculum, while applicable in part to History, was predominantly about other subject areas. This question of state, as opposed to national history, and the variations that continue to exist between schools in each state, again lends itself to questions about just how necessary the achievement of a national *ACHistory* was.

7.5.1 Media and Academic Views on the Inclusion of Local State History

Concern about the inclusion, or lack thereof, of local history in the *ACHistory* was also evident to a small extent in media and academic articles. For instance, in South Australia, the lack of education about Proclamation Day was raised as a concern. Proclamation Day, which commemorates the arrival of Governor John Hindmarsh at Holdfast Bay in 1836, was only commemorated in South Australia. In 2015 two articles appeared in *The Advertiser* (Gailberger, 2015; Smith, Lim & Gailberger, 2015) arguing that the origins of Proclamation Day had been forgotten by many South Australians and that it should be included in the state's education curriculum. This showed, that at least in South Australia, local history was seen as a concern in the media.

Similar pushes for an increase in local history were also apparent on at least one occasion in the media in Western Australia. One article in *The West Australian*

reported on attempts to incorporate more local history in schools in the Pilbara as “There’s no point teaching about the Snowy Mountain Scheme here when none of them have been to the Snowy Mountains and have no idea what snow is, whereas if you teach them about Cossack it is something they can relate to” (Zaunmayr, 2018). This demonstrated a similar opinion to those of participants in this study who felt local state history was a good way of engaging students.

Prior to the 2018 state election in Victoria a brief mention in one *ABC* article that “The Coalition...want to free teachers of bureaucratic work and allow them to teach issues that are important to ‘local circumstances’” (Willingham, 2018) was perhaps a suggestion that it was a very minor concern reflected in the media in this state too.

One academic, Harrison (2013), whose research looked at the engagement of Indigenous students, argued for an increased focus on local histories in the *ACHistory*. He argued that “history is local and needs to be studied locally, and to do otherwise is to disempower those children who do not abide by an epistemology that produces knowledge as disembodied and placeless” (Harrison, 2013, 215). While there were some calls for a greater inclusion of local history, it should be noted that “a curriculum that simultaneously invokes local, minority, national, regional and global identities need not be construed as contradictory, but rather as offering resources and frames for extended cultural repertoires available for a variety of relational contingencies” (Doherty, 2014, 179).

7.6 Indigenous History

Participants were not asked a specific question about the inclusion of Indigenous history, although it was sometimes provided as a prompt when participants struggled to answer a question, such as what history they thought it was important for school students to learn. Indigenous history was also mentioned in one of the 2014 review findings, which were provided for teacher participants.

The teaching of Indigenous history, the extent it was taught and the way it has been taught in the past were not always viewed positively by participants. There was a variation of views amongst students and parents on the importance of learning Indigenous history when the topic emerged in focus groups and interviews, generally in the context of Australian history. One student held the opinion that Indigenous history was not relevant in comparison to other types of history (SA1). In contrast, a student in another group stated that “Indigenous history and stuff is very applicable, so we can relate to it well” (WA2).

Occasionally, Indigenous history was raised by parent participants. Their concern about the amount of Indigenous history that was taught in History classes was at times a result of their own schooling with one parent noting that “I found at school I studied too much Aboriginal history...I thought it was quite narrow” (SA3P2). Another parent held that Indigenous culture was important, but did not see it as being as important as other areas of history. “Indigenous history is important, because we live in this country, but perhaps as far as shaping the way our world is today, it’s probably not as important” (SA2P).

Interestingly, two parents when asked if there were any topics they felt that were not appropriate for school History lessons, raised Indigenous history, but held different perspectives. The first parent felt that certain topics which were being shied away from in schools should not be ignored.

No. If it's there, it's in the past it should be discussed, it should be known. All the Americans know about the Indians getting massacred, so why don't the kids here know about the Aboriginals being hunted like wild animals?
(WA1P)

The second parent was more concerned about how Indigenous culture was taught and whether dreamtime stories were taught as fact or part of Indigenous culture.

It depends how they are taught. I mean, I think that aboriginal history is good, but I don't think we have to take in all of their dream stories as...history fine, but not as anything else, you know? I mean I don't think it's appropriate that they have to be taught, like I said, but it's probably more Science than History, evolution and stuff.
(WA2P)

Seven of the nine teachers who participated in this study talked about Indigenous history, although in some cases only in passing. In the context of the 2014 review's findings, which are discussed in the next chapter, one teacher commented in terms of the positives and negatives of Indigenous and western cultures.

Indigenous, yes. I think that's critical. I think we do a very sanitised version of Australian history and it skims over the atrocities of the Australian government or the British government. I think kids need to understand that. Plus, if you're doing indigenous history, yes, it's important because you can also link it, you can link those things to other atrocities in history and other cultural backgrounds and you can make those links and talk about why haven't we learned from this? (V1)

Other teachers, also in the context of the 2014 review's finding that the curriculum needed to better recognise the strengths and weaknesses of Western and Indigenous cultures, agreed that they looked at Western cultural history quite frequently, and that while the curriculum did "to some degree... [look] at indigenous culture and the loss of it" (SA2T), the strengths and weaknesses of Indigenous culture were not always covered as often (SA1T). One teacher held that

Indigenous history is basically tokenism. There's a bit of it in [the curriculum], but it's not really in everything we do and it could be. It could be much more embedded than it is... (SA5T)

While only one participant raised the issue of racism, her personal experience suggested that, at least in her school context, this could be an issue when teaching Indigenous history.

The first lot of Year 10s I ever [taught], did not like the civil rights topic at all. And depending on the kids' context, because the civil rights content [in] the curriculum is based on Indigenous Australians. Now, as horrible as this sounds, depending on the context of the child and the context of the school and where they sit in relation to [the] Indigenous population and what their own personal opinion is on that, I've had some kids go, 'I'm not learning about that' and to the point I had a parent write a letter to say 'my child is not learning about that'. (WA1T)

The issue of racism was not raised in any other interviews or any focus groups, but in some school contexts, it could be dilemma faced, when teaching certain topics under the *ACHistory*.

While the amount of Indigenous history taught was a concern for some participants who considered there was too much of it in the *ACHistory*, others felt

that it should be covered in more depth or that certain details were missing. Even within the responses from groups of students, there seemed to be a contradiction in how much participants felt should be taught in the context of other Australian history. This is demonstrated in the responses from two Victorian students.

S3: Australian history? I think we should learn more, because, like, we don't really...Last year we learnt about Aboriginals and then that's about it. Like, we haven't really learnt much.

S2: I think there's certainly a place for more. Last year we did a bit more, more learning around Aboriginals today, but I'd like to get more history, like what happened in the decades leading up to the Stolen generations and even just how it's all come together, our country as a whole. (V1)

Another group of Year 10 students in South Australia agreed that Indigenous history was not taught in the detail they would prefer.

S3: ...we just kept on looking at the same people like, Captain Cook every year and that just got really boring and repetitive, and I know that back in Year 5 [or] 6 I would have liked to learn more about Aboriginal culture... their culture before Australia was settled, because I think we kind of miss a lot.

S2: That's the kind of time period. We only look at like the first settlement things, we don't really branch out.

S3: And even when we look at Aboriginal rights and stuff it's all after the settlement, but we kind of don't know much about the other cultures and we probably don't know much about their languages. Quite a few have been lost. (SA3)

The responses of these two groups illustrates that there is some interest among certain students to learn more about Indigenous history than is currently facilitated under the curriculum. That the second group of students viewed the Indigenous history they had been taught so far as too narrow was also interesting and

comparable to the complaint expressed by one parent noted earlier when considering her own schooling (SA3P2).

7.6.1 Media and Academic Views on Indigenous History in the *Australian Curriculum: History*

In 2014, eighteen months before the first interviews for this study were held, some discussion emerged in the media about the amount of Indigenous history included in the *ACHistory*. This discussion was prompted, at least in part, by the announcement of the 2014 review and by the opinions emerging out of right-wing think tanks, like the Institute of Public Affairs, which claimed that there was “too much focus on Indigenous history, and not enough on democracy, liberalism and freedom” (Cowie, 2014). The claim that there was too great a focus on Indigenous history was disputed by the New South Wales Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (Cowie, 2014).

Further, after the 2014 review’s release, there were some claims presented in the media that the approach taken to Indigenous history in some schools was “a box-ticking exercise” (Bickers, 2015). This was also raised as a concern by one teacher in this study (SA5T). One related issue, and a potential cause of “box-ticking”, was the lack of professional development for teachers in this area. Due to the lack of professional development on Aboriginal perspectives it was suggested that “some teachers thought it better to not teach it than teach the wrong thing” (Bickers, 2015)

One article on *The Conversation* noted that “Despite political posturing on both sides of the debate, Indigenous history features infrequently in the secondary

history curriculum” (Foley & Muldoon, 2014). This relates to the comments of some student participants, who stated that they had not studied any Indigenous history topics in secondary school until Year 10.

In secondary school, students are meant to be introduced to some Indigenous history through an investigation of Ancient Australia in Year 7. Zarmati (2015) notes that students are not introduced to the “darker” aspects of Indigenous history until later in secondary school. This is due to the assumed maturity levels of students. These darker aspects include the massacres of Indigenous people and land dispossession. However, specific events such as “the massacre of large numbers of unarmed Aboriginal men, women, and children at Myall Creek (New South Wales, 1838), Kurnai (Victoria, 1858), and Coniston (Northern Territory, 1928) are not explicitly mentioned in the online ACARA document” (Zarmati, 2015, 94), so the choice to teach students about these events was left up to teachers’ discretion. While such events and incidents are not set out explicitly in the *ACHistory* document, Sharp (2015, 30) recommended an inquiry approach to teaching History in order to “[connect] it to issues that remain important in contemporary times, such as women’s rights and Indigenous affairs”. This would also help to counteract claims of “box-ticking”.

7.7 Repetition of Content

Repetition was a key concern around the study of Australian history. As identified by Clark in her book *History’s Children* (2008), it is easy for students to become fatigued from studying the same types of Australian history across multiple year levels. The *ACHistory* which set out the content to be studied at each year level was intended to resolve the issue of repetition and the resultant student

disengagement that can follow. Unfortunately, amongst some student participants a dislike for Australian history, in particular, still persisted despite the move to the *ACHistory* which occurred after Clark's study. Although the *ACHistory* aimed to avoid repetition (National Curriculum Board, 2009a), whether it successfully achieved this was unclear.

Participants were not asked about repetition in the *ACHistory*, however, it was an issue that was raised by the participants themselves in discussions. Repetition emerged as a concern for both parents and students, with some feeling that Australian history in particular was repeated often. A feeling of boredom as a result of perceived repetition was apparent in the way many students viewed Australian history, suggesting that it is still an issue that needs to be addressed in terms of student engagement.

Students who disliked Australian history described it as (SA5) repetitive and boring.

C: What's your opinion about the amount of Australian history you learn in school?

S1: Well, this year we did a fair bit of Aboriginal rights, like, we just finished the whole unit on that, and then last year we didn't do any Australian heritage or anything.

S3: I feel like lots of the curriculum, it expects you to learn about Australian history, but we almost kind of find when we learn about Australian [history] it's a chore, because we learn about it every year pretty much and they never find a way to make it interesting.

S2: It gets repetitive. (SA3)

Several student focus groups were very vocal about the fact that they had repeated the same Australian history over several years. Students in one group (SA4), “didn’t like it that much” as they preferred world history. While one student expressed an interest in Australian sporting history, in general the group felt that they had learnt “too much” Australian history. One student in a different group (WA3) conceded that Australian history was important, but was vocal about disliking Australian history and wished that the amount of Australian history being taught could be reduced.

One parent expressed a particular concern about the repetition in Australian history taught in primary school and the resultant lack of enthusiasm this caused in her children. As she explained,

...both of my sons in junior school had come to me and said: ‘Oh Mum, this curriculum just keeps going over and over the Australian history and we would like to do something else’. (SA3P1)

This parent further expanded to explain what she would like to see changed about the current curriculum.

I’d streamline it a bit more, it just seems, and again I’m going back to the junior school, the middle [and] senior school seem to get a really good cross section from what I’ve seen with my eldest son, but the junior school...curriculum seems to rehash continually. (SA3P1)

While repetition of the same few Australian history topics seems to be a concern for some parents and students in regards to student engagement, one member of a History Teacher’s Association (HTAWA) offered an alternative view on repetition.

[T]he best part of [having a] national curriculum is that the kids don't get that concept of repeating things. But when you repeat it you do it differently. The way that I would teach, say Egypt...would be very different from a grade three teacher teaching ancient Egypt. (HTAWA)

This shows that for at least one participant repetition of content was not a concern as she held that the way History topics are taught at different points in a student's schooling would vary at each level.

Likewise, repetition of content did not appear to be a concern in either the media or peer-reviewed academic articles used for triangulation. As the student participants in this study transitioned to the *ACHistory* partway through their schooling, this may account for some of the repetition they and the parent participants noticed, and explain why it was still a concern for them.

7.8 The Australian History Curriculum and the Media

One question, asked out of interest to hear their perspectives, was why, in the opinion of teachers and History Teacher Association members, History teaching seemed to generate so much discussion in the media. While this question was not directly related to Australian history, the responses of many participants were. Most participants gave detailed opinions when asked this question and seemed to consider this issue in terms of reasons why the general public were interested, who encouraged this interest and why, and the ease in which the media were able to sense stories in relation to the subject.

John Howard was given credit by four participants (WA2T, WA3T, SA1T, SA5T) for generating the debate about, and interest in, History teaching in schools

amongst the media. While some of the participants viewed this in a positive light and credited him with raising the profile of the subject, one viewed it in negative terms.

John Howard and his values for Australian schooling...10 years ago...he was promoting this History should be compulsory, everyone should learn History, because it promotes what it means to be Australian, and since he made those statements about values for Australian schooling, everyone sort of went, 'Oh that's just conservatism and that's just his bias and his agenda he's pushing and he dragged History into it too'. And I think that's where a lot of the fuss and bother comes about because of the Liberal party under Howard pushing for this national curriculum, and History must be in there, and people saw it as this vehicle to drive his conservative sort of ideas. I think that's where the anger comes from. (SA5T)

In comparison, another participant, while recognising the politics surrounding History as a subject, viewed John Howard's promotion of the subject as a positive move, with the media commentary as a side effect of that.

I think unlike Maths or Sciences or subjects like that, History is largely, in a lot of ways opinion based and ideology based. I think it probably goes back to...John Howard's time as prime minister...and it was a good thing that he promoted the History as a subject that...needed to be more valued and should be compulsory in schools. But he also put forward his political view that it should be a positive message about Australia and all Australia's success, and obviously that stirred up a lot of commentary at the time... it's just something the media people are interested in... You're not going to have too much debate about the way we handle teaching Math or the way we teach Science or maybe even English or whatever, but with History ... it's largely a political subject. You know, people do feel quite passionate about which way you look at it, whether you look at it from a positive aspect or a negative aspect, you know, you focus on bad things that have been done in the name of a Western country or look at it from a victor's perspective. So I think as soon as something is debated in the media, I think people are more interested in keeping the debate going maybe. (SA1T)

This participant raised the controversy surrounding how Australia's story is viewed and the passion people feel about which element is focused on. One view that emerged was the understanding that the general public feel they have of the subject, and the right they potentially feel to comment on History due to this understanding.

Everyone feels that they have a right and they have an understanding of it...And it's something that is all encompassing, so if you watch [television] there [are] history programs... So, everyone has a connection to history in some way. And it's an easy one to attack, whereas I think people...are more fearful of say attacking a Maths or Science because they might ... feel that they've come up as being a bit stupid. They might not know something or they don't have that expertise, so History is a soft target. I think, because a lot of people identify with history and it's something that you, you've centred that national consciousness, and all of that so people feel they have to have a view on that. So then there's a way of manipulating what people want with their points of view as well, so you can get History to cover what you feel is important then you're maybe getting your message across in a different way...I think too History is so linked to every other area as well, like as in politics, civics and citizenship type thing; it's linked to economics; it's linked to geography; it's linked to literacy, so you're bringing in lots of different factions in. (HTAWA)

The comment that History was linked to other areas was an important one that this section will return to at a later point. The existence of a national consciousness, as the above comments pointed out, means that many people have a view on Australia's past and identify with it. The proliferation of Australian history in the media through documentaries, general knowledge quiz shows, and news reports helps to increase Australians' knowledge of their past and their identification with

this history. Identification means that many people feel they have an ownership of the national story and a “right” to comment on or question how it is presented.

One History Teachers’ Association member believed that the interest of the media reflected a growing understanding by the general public and their interest in Australian history. This interest could have been in part encouraged by Howard’s promotion of History (HTASA).

Australian’s are starting to understand, also all of our history, that very important history, especially the Australian history pre-settlement, and starting to understand the nature of frontier conflict here in Australia and ask very good questions about how has history been managed in the past when we recorded Australian history, especially from settlement, European settlement and its impact, and every other stage right through to first Australians? And I think the more the students and the more the public engage with those issues, I think it’s better for the nation, I think it is better for every person in this country. (HTASA)

While this participant held a positive view of the media’s interest in History teaching, and Australian history more generally, this sort of interest was viewed by another participant as “problematic” particularly in relation to the curriculum as the media lacked an understanding of the “curriculum detail level”.

The media, for me... it’s quite problematic, because they’re not, and they can’t be, because their audience isn’t really interested at a curriculum detail level... I think it was apparent at the time, that History would attract the stories. I mean there’s a story about everything. Kids can’t add up any more so, there’s a Maths story. And Science, we’re behind in Science. In English, the kids can’t read. But History seemed to attract a disproportionate interest because of the history wars, this notion that we could start a blue. So, I don’t know how other associations or other disciplines’ people would feel about that but the media seemed to understand something about History, in the way that it doesn’t about Maths and Science... The media was interested, but

media interest is sporadic and shallow and often seeking out a confrontation to create a headline. (HTAA)

This feeling that the media interest was due to controversy was not isolated just to this participant, with another teacher commenting on this aspect (SA4T). A third participant (WA1T), like the one quoted above, felt that unlike other subject areas, such as English and Mathematics, History generated more comments. She explained that in her opinion History generated more comments in the media because “everyone’s got an opinion, because it’s a topic that allows for so many different perspectives and it’s also a very inclusive and very diverse topic, so everyone looks at it and thinks, I think this way” (WA1T). This diversity of opinions is perhaps one reason why the debate surrounding the *ACHistory* seemed to gain such prominence, particularly in relation to the history wars.

Two participants linked the media’s interest in History teaching to a political agenda. One participant saw it as a reflection of issues that were at play in Australian society during the time of the 2014 review, the public opinions that were associated with them, and the way this was reflected in the curriculum.

I think it was because it was the number one discipline in our area [Humanities]... I think it just attracted attention because it was number one and it was given sort of the arguments or the conversation around it, that Howard era time, and flowing on from there, I think there was some wider issues that were coming into there, such as immigration, the role of Islamic migrants and Islamic history...you could almost see there was a bit of reflection on wider developments in Australian society and how that fitted into, or was reflected in the teaching of History. So, I think there was a little bit of a political agenda maybe, possibly creeping into what was being put together, but I think maybe just because it was a Phase 1 [subject under the Australian Curriculum]. (WA3T)

In contrast, the other teacher felt that it was related to how politicians would be perceived in history after their retirements and their concern with guiding that perception.

Because the politicians are very conscious that their long-term memorials will be written by historians and they are very concerned to modify how that's done. Now that's a political influence. They tend to lead it. The other thing is History, ideally, and it's in the core part, talks about contestability and narratives and a lot of people aren't familiar with that and they like to think there is one impression of history, but there isn't and never has been, but it's the simplistic view. (SA3T)

Further, other teachers, linked the media commentary to the controversy surrounding various historical perspectives and the multiple views that exist on the same events. Participants' views on the way federal politicians influenced which perspectives and events made it into the curriculum is examined in the next chapter.

7.9 Summary

One of the key findings of this chapter was the differences in views held by the participants and the media articles used for triangulation. Further, the areas of interest for the media did not seem to align with those of the participants. While a greater inclusion of Australian history was a concern evident in many media articles, this did not align with the views of participants.

Australian history was generally viewed by participants as an important topic that Australian students should study in school. The amount of Australian history taught under the *ACHistory* was generally viewed as sufficient. In terms of the type of history taught, participants viewed Australian history within a world

history context to be important, as it allowed students to gain a broader perspective and provided the curriculum with a greater structure. This view was not evident in the media articles that called for more Australian history, but was apparent in one article concerned that students would not learn about recent world events (Koelma, 2014).

A lack of explicit opportunities for students to study local history in the secondary years was raised as one criticism by some parents and teachers, and in three media articles (Gailberger, 2015; Smith, Lim & Gailberger, 2015; Zaubmayr, 2018). They felt that the ability for students to connect with their local communities and feel a sense of belonging was missing in the current focus on national rather than local history. This view was, however, not shared by all participants or by all media articles.

There were mixed views Indigenous Australian history, with some parents feeling that it was not a vital topic and others feeling that it was important for Australian students to know. Two groups of students explained that they felt there was room in the curriculum to cover different elements of Indigenous history. With one teacher describing the handling of Indigenous history as “basically tokenism” (SA5T), and another viewing it as a “sanitised version of Australian history” (V1T), there was perhaps good reason to reassess how this topic was treated in the curriculum.

Another theme or area of concern that emerged was repetition. While repetition was not an issue that appeared in the media data, this was an issue that was of particular concern to the students who felt that they had been forced to study the

same Australian history repeatedly. As a result, these students found Australian history to be boring and found it difficult to engage with the repeated topics. Repetition was also a particular concern for one parent (SA3P), who found that her children were unhappy with the amount of Australian history they studied in primary school. In contrast, one History Teachers' Association member did not find repetition to be a concern, as she held that teachers at different levels, such as primary and high school, would approach the same topics in different ways.

The treatment of History teaching in the media was another topic discussed with participants. Teachers and HTA members held an array of views on this topic, but there were several common views. John Howard was largely credited with raising the profile of History, and in particular Australian history. Due to this, the subject was seen as important, leading to its inclusion in the first four subject areas developed under the Australian Curriculum. History was a topic that many people felt, according to some teacher participants, they had both a solid understanding of and a connection to. This in turn led to many people in the general public holding an opinion on History education and an interest in media articles pertaining to it.

While Australian history is just one aspect of the *ACHistory*, it is one which received a lot of commentary both from politicians, the media, and other commentators. Overall, Australian history, despite some criticisms regarding the focus on certain aspects and unwelcome repetition, was viewed by most participants as an important area of study, but they did not necessarily see a need for more.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE INVOLVEMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH GOVERNMENT IN HISTORY EDUCATION

8.1 Introduction

The introduction of the Australian Curriculum represented a change in the involvement of the Commonwealth Government in school curriculum. In 2010, before the implementation of the Australian Curriculum had actually occurred, it was noted that “The proposed national curriculum has given much more prominence to the role of the Commonwealth Government than historically has been the case” (Brady & Kennedy, 2010, 12). This development was the culmination of decades of the Commonwealth slowly gaining a greater interest in the area, as discussed in Chapter Three. This chapter looks at the involvement of the Commonwealth Government in the area of school History education. It begins by examining the views of participants, academics and the media on the significance of the 2014 *Review of the Australian Curriculum* (2014 review) in terms of History and whether this review led to any obvious changes in schools. The chapter then moves on to examine participants’ views on the role the Commonwealth Government should have in future curriculum development. Finally, the chapter concludes by discussing the differences in implementation of the *Australian Curriculum: History (ACHistory)* in Victoria and Western Australia.

8.2 How Significant was the 2014 Review?

One question that emerged during interviews, particularly with some teachers, was whether the 2014 review had, in their view, resulted in a change in the curriculum or their interpretation of the curriculum. In an article on *The Conversation* one academic, Adoniou from the University of Canberra, stated that

all in all, the curriculum review was much ado about nothing much - just an exercise where a newly incumbent government sprays a policy from a previous government so that it smells more like them. (Adoniou, Loudon & Savage, 2015).

Yet despite this, there was a belief not long after the release of the 2014 review's findings that it could potentially lead to longer term reforms in education (Gannicott, 2014). So far, this has not been the case. The view that not much changed seemed to be supported by the opinions of the participants of this study. One History Teachers' Association member described the 2014 review as a "puzzle", as he reflected on the changes that occurred as a result of the review.

...the review is a puzzle to me. It was put in place by the new [Abbott] government, seemingly to impose, or so it was said by some, to impose some sort of conservative constraints on the syllabus. And the outcome of this is surprising in that, I don't know that very much of any substance was done with the actual content, but that we have this reversion to SOSE which was not flagged at all. So, I'm just not sure what has gone on there. There was a big fuss made of that review and I'm not sure it amounted to very much in the end. (HTAA)

Interestingly, this History Teachers' Association member held the view, as shown in the quotation above, that the 2014 review did not result in many changes to the content of the *ACHistory*. As he noted, the move to Humanities and Social Sciences (HASS) was one of the major outcomes of the review in terms of

History. This change was identified by one teacher as predominantly an “administrative change”.

Administrative changes, yes. Certainly, the way here in WA our School Standards and Curriculum authority. Let me get the name right, [School Curriculum and Standards Authority] SCSA, certainly the way that they’ve repackaged things integrating the four disciplines into one, rather than treating them as separate phase entities. You know, here there has been a lot of change in the way they’ve been packaged and developed, but I don’t think I’ve seen, certainly it’s way too early to have seen, too many differences in the students we’ve got coming through. (WA3T)

This view that not much had changed substantially was also apparent in the responses from some of the teachers interviewed. One teacher commented that, “I haven’t noticed many changes since the review, but that may be because I haven’t looked at the Australian Curriculum website that closely.” (WA2T).

Another teacher explained that the changes were a matter of the way the *ACHistory* was interpreted, rather than a major change in content, and in his opinion did not result in a shift in teaching.

C: Have you noticed many changes since the review came out?

No. There were very few and there are even less in people’s actual teaching in the classrooms. Once people have embraced the curriculum, overall the changes that happened in the review have been very light. And can be argued they are in terms of interpretation more than anything else. (SA3T)

The 2014 review, was the last major foray into the History curriculum by the Commonwealth Government, but it seemed, did not result in a major change. As noted in Chapter Three, despite this lack of considerable alteration to the content of the *ACHistory*, the 2014 review did seem to have the effect of calming tensions between the two sides of politics over what was included in the curriculum. While the 2014 review may have had the positive effect of relieving tensions, it

did lead to further questions about the involvement of the Commonwealth Government in this area and further predictions that states would choose to “develop the curriculum in their own varied ways and undermine the progress that had been made with the curriculum” (Tudball, 2014). While this divergence in state directions may not have translated into drastic changes in the classroom at the time of participants’ interviews, this may be an area of interest in the future.

8.3 The Aftermath: Reflections on the Review by Academics and the Media

The release of the findings of the 2014 review generated a lot of discussion by both academic and media commentators. Many of these discussions were published on *The Conversation*. While the opinions provided on *The Conversation* came from academics, it should be noted that as these articles are not peer-reviewed they were classified as media articles for triangulation.

One criticism of the 2014 review concerned the perception that it was an exercise where “the outcome was pre-determined by the minister’s choice of reviewers and a long-running media campaign of promoting a ‘back to the basics’ approach” (Adoniou, Loudon, Zyngler & Riddle, 2014). In the same article several academic commentators, such as Stewart Riddle from the University of Southern Queensland and Misty Adoniou from the University of Canberra, made similar comments.

The impression that the outcome was set before the 2014 review had even begun, and was being used as a political distraction, immediately caused unfavourable opinions about the potential findings to appear. This discontent persisted until the

findings were eventually released (Adoniou, Louden, Zyngler & Riddle, 2014). This criticism of the choice of reviewers, Kevin Donnelly and Kenneth Wiltshire, and the sense that they were selected to produce a specific outcome also emerged amongst participants, as will be discussed later in this chapter.

Another criticism levelled at the findings was the apparent return to Studies of Society and Environment (SOSE) that was recommended for the primary years. The two reviewers disagreed on an approach for the curriculum in the primary years, but both recommended changes to the overall curriculum, not just History, at this level (Tudball, 2014; Adoniou, Louden, Zyngler & Riddle, 2014). At the time once academic commented that,

Wiltshire's curriculum model further reduces content in these years by integrating history, geography and civics and citizenship into a combined humanities and social sciences subject. This is a surprising recommendation, because it would mean a return to Studies in Society and Environment (SOSE), which is being phased out as the Australian curriculum is progressively implemented...A reversion to SOSE is at odds with the final report's support of a more rigorous curriculum based on discipline knowledge. (Maude, 2014)

SOSE, as discussed in Chapter Two, had been criticised for its lack of academic rigour, so it was not anticipated that this would be one of the recommendations of the 2014 review (Maude, 2014). This move, however, was not considered a large change as many schools had continued to use this combined approach even under the *ACHistory* (Adoniou, Louden & Savage, 2015). Finally, the findings of the review were criticised for being contradictory in that they recommended to both pare back the curriculum, while at the same time adding depth to the content (Tudball, 2014) and for challenging "the expert and professional processes ACARA has used for ensuring a good curriculum design" (Brennan, 2014).

Despite some maintained criticisms of the choice of reviewers and their existing ideologies influencing the outcome, there were some areas of the review's findings that the academics writing for *The Conversation* agreed with. For instance, Bill Loudon from the University of Western Australia agreed with the 2014 review's conclusion that "the compromises required to satisfy the range of stakeholders' views have not been enough to deliver a truly national curriculum" and that while

The review offers a few of the expected free kicks about the lack of focus on Australia's Judeo-Christian heritage and the impact and significance of Western civilisation, but on the whole it is a fair and thoughtful response to the many submissions received. (Adoniou, Loudon, Zyngler & Riddle, 2014)

As noted in Chapter Three, the findings of the 2014 review were generally considered mild in comparison to early predictions and fears about what they could contain.

While the 2014 review flagged some potential changes to the *ACHistory*, how many of these changes would influence teaching in classrooms was debated (Adoniou, Loudon, Zyngler & Riddle, 2014). Due to the complex processes used to negotiate between the state educational bodies and ACARA, one academic, Marie Brennan, predicted that it would be "highly unlikely that any major changes will happen before 2016" (Brennan, 2014).

One accomplishment attributed to the 2014 review in the year following the release of the findings was the suspension of hostilities over the curriculum. However, the possibility for further state divergence in curriculum was also flagged. "There's also a good argument to be made that Australia doesn't really

have a national curriculum yet. Instead, our federal system of governance has ensured multiple interpretations and enactments of the curriculum have emerged across states and territories” (Adoniou, Loudon, Savage, 2015). That the states may choose to go in different directions following the 2014 review was a concern shared by another academic at Monash University (Tudball, 2014).

8.4 School Stakeholder Views on their Involvement in the Review Process

Considering that the 2014 review initially generated a large amount of discussion, in both the media and amongst academics, it was important to see how it was perceived by the key school stakeholders of this study. The involvement of the adult stakeholders in the 2014 review was mixed, with four of the seven parents being either unaware of the review occurring or only vaguely aware. There seemed, as demonstrated by particularly by the parent from Western Australia (WA1P), to be a lack of awareness amongst parents that they were able to be involved by submitting comments to the review. It should be noted that the interviews for this project were held in 2016, eighteen months to two years after the release of the results of the 2014 review, so it is possible that these parents may have been aware in 2014, but had forgotten by the time of the interviews. However, based on the recollections of these parents, it seemed that most were unaware that they were able to be involved.

Some of the teachers (WA2T, SA3T) did choose to submit comments to the 2014 review either directly or through Teachers’ Associations, however others chose not to take part. The History Teachers’ Association members were able to comment on the involvement that their particular association had in the review

process, and while these associations did submit comments to the 2014 review, the view reflected in the responses of these participants showed they felt their role in the review was not particularly large in comparison to their initial role in developing the *ACHistory*. As one member stated,

Yes, that review. We found it interesting, and I can talk here from state and national level, because I would not be parting, they would be very similar comments. You were dealing with almost a two to two and a half year consultative process to come up with the Australian Curriculum. The next Wiltshire and Donnelly review was done in... Wasn't that like, if I recall, around about 6 months? And I know that our opportunity to have input into those points of discussion was very short as well. Deadlines were quite brief... We found that extraordinary. I think most teachers did, and anybody would. Plus, you're dealing with the input of thousands of teachers across the country who have millions of hours of experience, compared to two gentlemen selected by the minister. It just... doesn't need any comment really. It's intriguing. (HTASA)

This participant, as seen above, felt that in comparison to the time taken to initially develop the *ACHistory*, the 2014 review was rushed and that the comments of the two reviewers, Wiltshire and Donnelly, were favoured over the collective experience of Australian teachers. This is similar to the opinion of opposition education spokeswoman, Kate Ellis, who at the time of the announcement of the 2014 review, accused Christopher Pyne of asserting that “in six months two individuals [could] do a better job of coming up with a national curriculum than in five years academic experts from all around Australia working collaboratively achieved” (Hurst, 2014).

Another History Teachers' Association member who held that the 2014 review was a "political thing", did not feel that the History Teachers' Associations had a role.

...from my understanding...the associations were really an irrelevant part of the review, as was any form of anything to do with education. Really it was a political thing, I think, and [the] people involved with it. I don't think it was looking at reviewing it as in what's best for kids, I think it was reviewing it as a more a political thing at the time. (HTAWA)

This view that the 2014 review was about politics not education was not isolated to the History Teachers' Association members, with some teachers sharing this view. One teacher when asked about the involvement of teachers in the 2014 review responded "In regards to the review, I don't know that much about who was involved in the review. I think that was largely the government, wasn't it? ... I feel like that was a bit of an agenda" (SAIT).

One teacher called for stability and for the curriculum to remain the same to allow teachers to focus on educating students, rather than adapting to ever changing curriculum documents.

I think they need to stop changing it. I think what they should do is consult with teachers, ask them what we should be teaching. You're never going to please everyone, but consult with teachers to develop the curriculum and stick with it. Because what are we doing here, [is] reinventing the wheel. The schools are having to shuffle to redo resources and things like that. We should be able to focus on the kids and what they need, and focus on the teaching instead of changing our curriculum. (VIT)

However, it should be noted that this teacher was from Victoria and was at the time transitioning from AusVELs to the Victorian Curriculum.

The view that the 2014 review and the push to alter the curriculum were motivated by politics rather than for the benefit of Australian children may have hurt the perceptions on the Commonwealth's involvement in the school history curriculum and perceptions of the *ACHistory* itself. The view that some of the findings of the 2014 review do not reflect the needs of students in terms of engagement and scope also comes through in the responses of other teacher participants.

8.4.1 Teachers' Views on the Findings of the Review

Teacher participants were asked to comment on the findings of the 2014 review that related directly to the *ACHistory* (Review of the Australian Curriculum, 2014). While the majority had seen the findings before, they had not necessarily studied them closely in some cases, and not all teachers had found the time to look at the findings prior to their interviews (SA4T). This meant that for some teachers this was their first reading of the findings. Teachers tended to comment on each finding individually, so their responses are examined in relation to each individually. Overall, there was a mix of teachers agreeing and disagreeing with particular statements in the findings of the 2014 review, but some seemed to hold particularly negative views towards the findings. One teacher in particular when asked if he agreed with the findings of the review responded "No, I reject them" (SA3T).

The first finding of the 2014 review that related directly to the *ACHistory*, concerned Australia's Judeo-Christian heritage. This was one of the key concerns raised prior to the 2014 review. The finding reads: "The Australian Curriculum: History should be revised in order to properly recognise the impact and

significance of Western civilisation and Australia’s Judeo-Christian heritage, values and beliefs” (Department of Education, 2014a, 181). This finding elicited a range of responses from the teachers, from those who accepted this finding (WA2T, WA3T) to those who felt this was either unnecessary or too “narrow” a view (V1T, SA1T). One teacher responded very succinctly.

I don’t like the first one: History should be revised in order to properly recognise the impact and significance of Western civilisation and Australia’s Judeo-Christian heritage, values and beliefs. That’s a very narrow view. You definitely need to take a broader view of the world to give kids what they need in History. (V1T)

Despite the rejection of this finding by this first teacher (V1T), there seemed to be an acceptance from some other teachers that this view of history has some validity in terms of Australia’s origins. However, these teachers also felt that having room to acknowledge other cultural heritages was also important (SA2T, WA3T, SA1T, SA5T). This showed an agreement that a focus on Western and Judeo-Christian heritage is seen as too narrow. This view was illustrated particularly in the response from a teacher from Western Australia.

I think when push comes to shove, we were set up as a Judeo-Christian nation and certainly the impact of Western civilisation... once again, we are, even though we are an Asian nation, multicultural, you know, we are tied into Western European history. I think there’s the ability to acknowledge within that the impact and significance of other civilisations. (WA3T)

The view that Australian heritage is more than just Western and Judeo-Christian was prevalent amongst the teachers who responded to the 2014 review’s findings. While there was an acceptance from some that Judeo-Christian heritage should be taught, several teachers felt this needed to be taught within a broader context. In

responses to this finding, that the significance Western civilisation and Judeo-Christian heritage should be recognised in the curriculum, one teacher responded,

I'm not sure that it needs to be. You know, I understand where that's coming from, but I think it's just an obsession that some people have with, you know, this hang up about forgetting about our Judeo-Christian heritage, values and beliefs. I think we've progressed so much further from that and I don't mind the idea that we discuss the sort of, the early, soon after Federation, that's where we were at, that's what our values were, but I think if we're going to recognise that then there should be a, you know, a recognition that we've moved on from there and that and that there's a broader belief and values system in place now and so if we're going to look at that then you need to look at how that's changed over time as well.
(SA1T)

A need for a broader perspective was also raised by a different South Australian teacher who felt that, prior to the 2014 review, the *ACHistory* already sufficiently acknowledged Australia's Judeo-Christian heritage.

It did. I don't think there was any problem with that. The idea of Australia's Judeo-Christian heritage, values, and beliefs I think is a furphy and doesn't take into account the large atheist population, the Muslim population, the Chinese population. So, while there is absolutely some connection there... I don't think it's actually the connection the Christopher Pyne and the others actually wanted. So that's a question of how it's actually taught. If you look at the Anglican Church and its role with the British government, that's teaching Judeo-Christian heritage, but it's not particularly valued by people. And the way the First World War is actually set up in the current course it doesn't do very much about the debates about conscription, and it certainly doesn't go into the fact that most of the Catholics were against it. So, I think there is some scope for that, but not too much. Are we evangelical? No, we're not. And the course is fine. There's scope in there to have the fundamentalist schools talking about the Judeo-Christian heritage as a good thing, and the scope for other people to look at Year 10 about what the

missionaries did to the Indigenous people and say well, that was a bad thing. So, there's scope to do that. (SA3T)

Overall, there seemed to be a perception that this particular finding was too limiting on the scope of the curriculum in relation to Australia's history and did not fully recognise the cultural diversity of the nation.

The second finding of the 2014 review in relation to the *ACHistory* stated that: "Attention should also be given to developing an overall conceptual narrative that underpins what otherwise are disconnected, episodic historical developments, movements, epochs and events" (Department of Education, 2014a, 181). While gaps between topics were apparent to some teachers, others felt that a narrative already existed or that gaps were not a concern.

I think it's important to have a conceptual narrative, I feel like that's already there to an extent. I think, well, it's certainly there within the, you know, going from year level to year level. I know that it is disconnected in a lot of ways, but I don't feel that... weakens the impact of it. So, I'm not that bothered by that. I think that's no big deal, personally. (SA1T)

Two teachers from Western Australia agreed with this second finding. One of these teachers found that there was a jump between topics at the Year 9 level, in particular.

I agree with the second one, so attention should be given to developing an overall conceptual narrative, because it's true in Year 9 you do World War II and Industrial Revolution. There is a massive gap in between those two things. One of the issues we've had is okay, so we finished Industrial Revolution, we're going straight to World War [I], but there's this whole Australia being formed or colonised and having England as it's motherland in there. So, all of a sudden, we go from Industrial Revolution talking about England to all of a sudden Australia, World War I. (WA1T)

Likewise, the other Western Australian teacher felt that it was challenging to make connections obvious to middle school students with the topics outlined in the Australian Curriculum.

The overall conceptual narrative that underpins— I think that’s a good idea. I think it can be hard to weave that narrative or at least from where I’m standing. Well, put it this way, I think it’s going to be hard to actually weave that overall narrative in a way that makes sense to a Year 8 or Year 9 student. I don’t think it’s a bad idea though, but the challenge will be sort of really making that obvious to the students, because I think in a way, so many of the topics in the time that we’ve got, can become disconnected, as you say, episodic historical developments. (WA3T)

However, while these two teachers agreed with this finding and felt that an overarching narrative would be useful in helping students to make connections, other teachers felt that these connections already existed in the *ACHistory*. This view is illustrated by the comments of two teachers from South Australia. The first explained,

I think if we look at global history, which we need to do, and Australia as part of that, it’s not episodic. The examples that you use might be, but the overall narrative is quite clear. I think the people who put that in didn’t understand that there was a narrative there and it clearly starts from ancient studies in Year 7 and it goes through to the Middle Ages, and then it goes through to the modern world and then up to today. So there really is an overall structure and you can choose from within that. So, we do that. We, as I said to you before, make sure there is an Asian study in each one, so we are automatically telling an overarching theme and story. (SA3T)

The second teacher agreed with this.

The depth studies, whatever they are called, they’re not disconnected. If you know your history you can connect them. If you are a good historian and a

good History teacher you will make connections, and the students will then make those same connections. It's not disconnected. People think it's disconnected because they look at it on a linear spectrum, this event led to this event, and that's not true. History is very much intermingled and intertwined, so I disagree with that second statement and that's probably feedback from those who themselves haven't really got that history headset. (SA5T)

This shows that on this particular finding there was not a consensus amongst teacher participants with there being a disagreement over whether a clearer conceptual narrative was needed or if it was already apparent in the *ACHistory* document.

The third finding of the 2014 review related specifically to the *ACHistory* referred to Australian history. "A revision of the choice available throughout this curriculum should be conducted to ensure that students are covering all the key periods of Australian history, especially that of the 19th century." (Department of Education, 2014a, 181). Australian history, as seen in the previous chapter, can be a divisive issue. While this finding was not limited to just Australian history, several teachers focused particularly on this as they felt that Australian history had been sufficiently pushed in the curriculum. One teacher upon noticing the mention of Australian history in this finding commented,

Kids aren't interested. Give them an overview, but they don't want to do it. They're not interested in it and it's very hard to get them engaged in it and if you want kids to enjoy history, which obviously we do, you need to be doing topics that are interesting to them. There's no real topic in history that is irrelevant. It is all [relevant]. There is relevance to everything that has happened in the past. So you're not going to let the kids down by teaching them one topic over another and it's all about the skills as well, which you can do with any topic, but Australian history, I mean I personally find it dry,

so I can't even imagine how the kids find it. In fact, I know how they find it. They complain their bums off. (V1T)

This view is echoed in the response from another South Australian teacher, who agreed that students did not find this period of Australian history engaging.

Ok, there's an oxymoron. [The] Australian country didn't exist in the 19th century so that's the first thing. And so, there's no need to do each individual state. So, if you've done this well, I think it is in fact covered. But that was key wording when the criticism was that they wanted more Federalism and the impact of the Federal government. The kids find Federalism the story actually quite boring by itself. If you pitch it against the American civil war, how they unified versus this country and that country, you can actually cover it in a very interesting contrasting way and cover it quite quickly. It makes a lot more sense to do that, to say this is what Australia did, we didn't have a civil war, how come? Versus they did, they did. So that's how we cover that. Now, do we need to discuss the Fathers of Federalism? No, we don't. (SA3T)

These two teachers had vastly different levels of teaching experience with the first having taught for two years, while the other had been a teacher for over thirty years. One commonality amongst the responses from these teachers, who focused on the Australian history aspect of the finding, was that the important points of Australian history in the 19th century were already covered in the *ACHistory*, and that an increase was unnecessary.

History is a difficult thing to cover all the key periods. I feel like we largely cover the important periods. I mean, 19th century of Australian history, there's a lot we do look at, especially obviously at Year 9. There's nothing I can think of that we don't touch on, that, you know, would desperately need to be there, that would make a big difference. (SA1T)

Only one teacher commented on the aspect of this finding that mentioned a “revision of choice”. This teacher seemed to take this aspect to mean the range of depth studies available. He commented that

...in a way the revision of choice has limited us here at [school name], but ... there was some head scratching in our department at the huge variety of choice and how you actually compare that across schools. (WA3T)

His comments are particularly interesting in relation to this, due to the decision in Western Australia, where this teacher was located, to limit some of the previous depth studies options, which had in turn created consistency across the state (Garnett & Blagaich, 2015).

The final finding upon which teachers were asked to comment focused on, although was not limited to, the primary years. The finding reads:

The curriculum needs to better acknowledge the strengths and weaknesses and the positives and negatives of both Western and Indigenous cultures and histories. Especially during the primary years of schooling, the emphasis should be on imparting historical knowledge and understanding central to the discipline instead of expecting children to be historiographers. (Department of Education, 2014a, 181)

The comment that children should not be expected to be historiographers was accepted by those who commented on it, as shown by the response from one South Australian teacher “I do agree that an emphasis should be on acquiring historical knowledge and understanding instead of expecting children to be historiographers.” (SA1T). However, another teacher was adamant that this was never an intention of the *ACHistory*, and so as a result of this, he disagreed with the finding.

It needs to better acknowledge the strengths and weaknesses of Western and Indigenous cultures and histories. I think it does acknowledge those quite well, I don't think there's any problem there. It could be built in quite

nicely, again with contrasts all the way through. Then, during the primary years, emphasis should be on imparting knowledge and understanding instead of expecting children to be historiographers. Ok, at no point did the curriculum before or now ask students to be historiographers. There was no expectation, there never was that students would be reading historians and debating their viewpoints. That is a furphy. (SA3T)

As the teachers involved in this study were teaching History at a secondary level, in some instances, they declined to comment in detail on this particular finding. Despite this, several did feel comfortable commenting on the primary years and how this impacted students when they entered the secondary classroom. Two teachers from Western Australia commented on the gaps in learning of students entering high school.

I think that that is important, the emphasis on imparting historical knowledge and understanding central to the discipline. I actually think that's pretty important. You know we're seeing students come through who for many, many reasons seem to lack some basic understandings that we see as central to what we teach and also just general knowledge. So, I think that's not a bad thing if that can actually be sort of put into play. But speaking as a parent whose kids are in primary school, yeah, I wouldn't want to be a primary school teacher having to deal with their over-laden curriculum. (WA3T)

Another teacher provided an explanation for some of "gaps" in student knowledge and understanding of History. She explained that one of the challenges faced by teachers at her school was the assumed knowledge that students, who moved to the Australian Curriculum part way through their schooling, seemed to lack.

I think they need to look at what they are expecting primary school students to do. A lot of primary kids don't have the literacy or the conceptual understanding to think about all of the things that they are being asked to

across all parts of the curriculum. So, across all parts of the curriculum they need to understand that they are expecting so much of these kids. One of the things we've had issues with being [a] high school is that the high school curriculum assumes that the kids have done the Australian Curriculum right from the word go. Whereas, the reality is we have Year 10 students that started the Australian Curriculum when they were in Year 7 and they've had none of that prior knowledge. So, they come into our classroom with these huge gaps in their learning that we either ignore or choose to go backwards and fill. So, as a classroom teacher, that's your prerogative to go, okay I'm going to ignore that and keep going, or I'm going to go back and fill those gaps. (WAIT)

While these teachers are not teaching in primary schools, they had noticed the flow on effects of a generally content-heavy primary school curriculum. The amount of content expected to be covered in the primary years was one general concern addressed in the 2014 review that was related not just to History (Department of Education, 2014a, 1).

8.4.2 School Stakeholder Views on Politicisation of the Curriculum

The charge that the *ACHistory* was politicised and politically biased appeared soon after the Australian Curriculum was released (Howard, 2012; Mason, 2010). As can be seen by the responses of the adult participants in this study a view emerged at the time of the 2014 review that this too was politically motivated. One article on *The Conversation* stated that, "The review process was contentious and politically motivated. It reignited and cemented Pyne's place in the culture wars" (Halbert, 2015).

One of the arguments used to justify the 2014 review was, as discussed in Chapter Three, the belief that the curriculum was biased and favoured a Labor ideology

while ignoring the Western and Judeo-Christian heritage of Australia (Donnelly, 2011c). While this was not a commonly held view amongst all participants in this study, it did emerge amongst some participants. One participant who strongly agreed with this sentiment came from Western Australia.

I find the curriculum skewed. It is more secular than history actually is. It ignores the Judeo-Christian basis. The themes and cross-curriculum priorities are the flavour of the year, I'm not necessarily against them, but they have coloured the curriculum. There is an overemphasis on women's issues. The Oxford textbook I purchased has about 12 authors, and three of those authors are women's studies lecturers. Women's issues appear in just about every topic, like in ancient Egypt or ancient China. It is skewed as we don't have topics just on kids, men or old people. Some historical figures were dedicated to Christ, like Alfred Deakin, but that doesn't come through in the curriculum. Another one was Samuel Marsden, I think. Unless you dig deeper you wouldn't know; they are not recognised for who they are underneath. (WA2T)

As can be seen, this participant held that Australia's Judeo-Christian heritage was not only not recognised in the curriculum, but was "ignored". His comments on the focus on women in the *ACHistory* suggest that he potentially saw the curriculum as holding a progressive leaning that excluded other views. Further, he agreed with the findings of the 2014 review as they aligned with his view on the use of conceptual narratives in History teaching. WA2T was one of the participants who participated in the 2014 review process through submitting comments. In his own words: "I was aware of it [the review] and I did write in. The people who were chosen to do the review were chosen for a reason" (WA2T).

His statement that the two reviewers, Wiltshire and Donnelly, were deliberately selected aligned with the comments made by other participants, who held less favourable views on the 2014 review and its motivations. The views of these

participants will be examined later in this section. This teacher's view also aligns somewhat with a comment made by one academic, Stewart Riddle from the University of Southern Queensland, who stated when the findings of the 2014 review were released that, "This is a review where the outcome was pre-determined by the minister's choice of reviewers and a long-running media campaign of promoting a 'back to the basics' approach" (Adoniou, Loudon, Zyngler & Riddle, 2014).

One other teacher from South Australia said that he found the curriculum to hold a particular ideological leaning and again identified women's issues as one area, among others, that demonstrated this.

Yeah, it's pretty socialist and liberal sort of progressive, if that makes sense. There's a bit of a bias in there...just the Year 9 course when you get into the industrialised, Industrial Revolution part of the Year 9 course, it's all just geared towards the plight of the worker. You know, the working poor, the union movement, some stuff about suffrage, women's movement, all that stuff is very much, it's very socialist, to be blunt. Like, it needs teaching, it's putting that era into context; I just feel as though there's a bit of overkill. And I'm not disagreeing, I like it in there, but to be fair it's probably more than it needs to be. (SA5T)

In contrast to the views of these teachers who felt the *ACHistory* had a left-wing bias, a different teacher from Victoria felt that the curriculum had an ideological leaning in the other direction. She stated that "...it's a pretty sanitised view of history. It's a pretty, probably Liberal, that older white male view of history. Their view of what's important in the world. They're an ageing party. Not really relevant." (V1T). This difference of opinions shows that among the participants in this small study there was no consensus on which way the *ACHistory* displayed an ideological bias, if it displayed one at all.

When asked if they felt that the *ACHistory* had been shaped at all by party politics, participant responses ranged from those who felt that it had certainly had an influence on the content of the curriculum or the writing process, to those who felt the curriculum was well balanced and did not see party politics as an issue that related to it.

One History Teachers' Association member who was involved in the development process held strong views on whether or not party politics played a role in development of the *ACHistory*.

I can say absolutely that the Labor party initiated this [The Australian Curriculum] and they initiated it at a time when Kevin Rudd came to power with a very large mandate and when the country had a great deal of money. And it was seen to be a good time to do something worthwhile, a national curriculum was a worthwhile thing to do. Labor had absolutely no ideological involvement in the syllabus at all. It was completely hands off and if it had of been anyway evident, I absolutely would have known about it.

So constantly we battled with Christopher Pyne saying really silly, stupid things that had no basis in fact, just bringing off old history wars scripts and just prattling them off and then the media would pick up on that and then they'd call Stuart Macintyre, a communist, and all this sort of thing. In none of the dealings I had, and I'm not a huge fan of the ministers involved at the time, or the ACARA officials or anything like that, at no point was there a policy ideologically driven... it was obviously neutral. If anything, it suffered from curriculum politics, but that charge is just completely unfounded. And yet, and interestingly when it finally came around to it, I think the review found that. I think the review was a huge waste of money in that it didn't seem to find anything much that it could change. It sort of

toyed with words here and there. So that was a red herring that interfered with production, in discussion all the way through. (HTAA)

This particular view was quite emphatic about the role that party politics played in terms of the initial development of the *ACHistory*. Other opinions put forward by other participants were not generally as strongly worded, but did in some instances demonstrate a similar view that party politics did not shape the curriculum. This was seen through the responses of three teachers as they considered whether the *ACHistory* represented one particular political ideology.

I think it was fairly neutral given the elements of some of the topics if you have a look at the rise of trade unions and Year 9 etcetera. I think in terms of left and right politics in Australia, I think it was fairly neutral and I think there was a balance that you could achieve in there. (WA3T)

Another teacher used the Industrial Revolution as an example of how the *ACHistory* demonstrated two different ideologies.

No... I don't think it does. If you look at the Industrial Revolution, ok it's entrepreneurship that gets it going and then the government actually makes money through taxes and exploitation. You go to the two World Wars and any other conflict that you've investigated historically, hopefully we see that governments have just supported allies in some cases, Vietnam. Hell, I don't think there's a specific leaning towards either Liberal or Labor or Greens. (SA2T)

A third teacher agreed that the *ACHistory* does not favour one political ideology, but expressed concern that this could happen in the future. "I can't see it so much, but I wouldn't want it to become an issue and if you left it up to the federal government to decide what we were going to be teaching I think it could quite easily become". (SA4T). This shows an apprehension about the involvement of

the Commonwealth Government; however, this participant did not expand on her concerns any further.

An alternate view offered by one teacher on potential political ideology in the *ACHistory*, held that while the curriculum itself did not favour one political ideology, a bias is perhaps evident amongst the views of teachers.

C: Do you believe the current History curriculum favours one political ideology over the other?

No, but having said that, there is no doubt that most of the teachers of History do come from more of a left-wing background than the teachers of say, economics. So that's already built in. So, to a degree it's there, but if you look at the national story, I think it is fairly well representative of both sides. The catch becomes that people from a left-wing background tend to regard history as about social change, the right-wing background they like to think it's about economic change, and so they are looking for different things than what's actually been reflected. If you take the whole national curriculum, not just the History part, the right wingers get their go in business studies, entrepreneurship studies, it's actually in there. So, I think overall the balance is actually good. (SA3T)

In looking at the overall Australian Curriculum, rather than History as an individual subject, this teacher found, as can be seen in the quotation above, that in his view a balance is achieved across different subject areas. It also goes back to the view that the role of the teacher is most important in ensuring diversity and interpreting the curriculum. The view that the interpretation of the classroom teacher was key to achieving balance came through in the responses of other teachers.

I think it depends on the interpretation of the people teaching it. You know, I know there's a lot of pressure to avoid the old black armband history, and things like that and clearly that's, I suppose, a bit of a right wing agenda, but

I think it's [the curriculum] presented in a way that the final decision does come down to the teacher ...you know, I don't think on that I'm unhappy with what's actually presented in the curriculum in terms of what you need to cover... I do think we've got enough independence to be able to make up our own minds on what ...ideologies we want to touch on, on what perspectives we want to look at it from. (SAIT)

Overall, there were mixed views amongst participants on whether the *ACHistory* either favoured one political ideology or has been influenced by party politics. Further, amongst those participants who felt that it did display a political leaning, there was disagreement over which way the curriculum leant. One benefit of the 2014 review was that there was a considerable drop in the amount of criticism directed towards the *ACHistory* publicly. As Loudon stated one year after the release of the 2014 review's findings, "The great achievement is that the curriculum matter has been settled: nationally, we have agreed to stop arguing the toss about curriculum content for a while and get on with the more important work of implementation" (Adoniou, Loudon & Savage, 2015). This indeed seems to be the case with the amount of media articles about the *ACHistory* slowing after the release of the 2014 review.

8.5 Stakeholder Views on the Involvement of the Commonwealth Government in the History Curriculum

The involvement of the Commonwealth Government in the development of the *ACHistory* was a contentious issue, with some commentators holding that it was not possible for the involvement of politicians to result in a politically neutral curriculum (Forrest, 2014). The comments of politicians about what "should" be taught in History classes have been viewed in the past with suspicion about their underlying motives (Boston, 2014). This section examines the views of

participants on the role of the Commonwealth Government in the development of the *ACHistory*, and who they felt was best placed to determine the content of the curriculum in the future.

8.5.1 What Role Should the Commonwealth Government have in Determining the History Curriculum?

Amongst the participants in this study there were mixed views on the role that the Commonwealth Government, and governments more generally, should hold in relation to the *ACHistory*. Some participants felt that the Commonwealth Government deserved a large role in determining the curriculum, while others believed that the determination of the curriculum should be left up to historians and teachers, without the influence of the Commonwealth Government or politicians. Mixed views were apparent in all school stakeholder groups, showing that there was not a consensus on the level of involvement the Commonwealth Government currently maintained in school History education.

Those who were opposed to the involvement of the Commonwealth Government at its current level put forward a number of reasons for this stance. One participant from Western Australia even shared the opinion that the Commonwealth's involvement in determining the content of the Australian Curriculum was unconstitutional.

Constitutionally, it is a state not a federal responsibility. I know it has been over 100 years since Federation and we are more of one nation now, so we should have perhaps some national direction, but I think it is unconstitutional and I don't mind diversity. (WA2T)

This, along with questioning the legality of the national curriculum, demonstrates a belief that the Australian Curriculum has led to a lack of diversity in History education. As previously noted, the implementation of the curriculum was left in the hands of state governments due to education not being set out as a Commonwealth power in the Australian Constitution, but this participant seemed to also be questioning the involvement of the Commonwealth Government in the development process rather than specifically the implementation stage.

A further issue related to the curriculum being handed down from one source, such as a government organisation like the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), was the concern about how far the Commonwealth Government was then able to dictate to schools and the issues that could arise in relation to this. The views of one parent participant demonstrated this particular anxiety.

C: Who do you believe should determine what is taught in History lessons?

I guess... not the government.

C: Not the government. Why do you say that?

Oh god, because that just brings to mind communist China or somewhere, or you know, a skewed version of history. That's what the risk is with any government dictating what is taught in history. So it should be free of direct government influence, but of course educators are sort of in the government system, so you know, hopefully there's a nice demarcation. (SA3P3)

This illustrates, once again, some of the concerns that emerged around the announcement of the 2014 review, that the Commonwealth Government would be able to dictate the content of the curriculum. This view also appeared in the response from one teacher.

C: Do you see a role for people like the federal government [in determining the curriculum]?

No. Well, again that might be skewed depending on who's in power and what the political issues are at the particular time, so I actually think that probably a group of specialist HASS [Humanities and Social Sciences] teachers would be the best. (SA4T)

Opinions on who, if not the Commonwealth Government, should determine the content of the curriculum is discussed in the next section. Yet, other participants felt that governments more generally, not the Commonwealth specifically, should have only a superficial role in determining curriculum, and instead educators and historians should instead make these decisions. This opinion seemed to exist, to an extent, amongst some teacher participants. For instance, one teacher initially responded that the government should not have a role at all, but later clarified that she saw them having a role in terms of policy, not in determining content.

None. They're not in the classroom. Their job is to make sure that policy is written, and their job is to make sure that schools run as efficiently as possible. I think it would be great if they said 'okay we're going to have a national curriculum, we'd like every state to accept that and then we're going to pass a law that blah blah blah'. But as far as them actually saying 'I think Year 9 students should study World War 1' I don't think that that's their role. And I think if it is their role then that's a mistake. (WA1T)

This would place the Commonwealth Government in a role of overseeing the Australian Curriculum rather than directly commenting on what they believe should be taught in schools, as has happened in recent years. Participant views on who, if not the Commonwealth, should determine the *ACHistory* are examined further in the next section.

While several participants considered that the Commonwealth Government should have some role, they did not all agree on the scope of this role, with others wanting a greater input from schools and teachers.

C: Who do you think should determine what is taught in school History lessons?

That's a very good question. One I've thought about that in other subject areas as well. I mean obviously, I guess, the government should have some say as well, but I think teachers and the schools, probably should have some input. Probably a combination of both I think. Because I think that there are things that all students should know about, if we talk about Australian history, for example. We do have a multicultural society now... a lot of people weren't born here and brought up here, so they come to this country without really understanding a lot about what the country is like and what it's about, how it got to be the way it is. I think that probably needs to be taught. (SA2P)

The need for some standardisation was one of the arguments put forward in support of the Commonwealth Government's role in determining the *ACHistory*. Due to this perceived need for some level of national standardisation in order to achieve national unity, the involvement of the Commonwealth Government was viewed by at least one participant as "inevitable". This teacher participant held that while it was inevitable that the Commonwealth Government would take up a role in History education, he was specific about in what ways their involvement could potentially have a positive influence.

C: What role do you think the federal government should have in determining the History curriculum?

They are inevitably a part of the story of History. They need to be taken out of the contemporary debate and put themselves at a bit of a distance from that. So, they need to be there in terms of a national story and unifying the nation. I have no hassles with that. They need to take out the idea that the Liberals want this, Labor wants that to make their own reflections look

[good]. That's short-term politics. That's not History. A few years ago, I've forgotten exactly, 2006 I think, Julie Bishop when she was minister for education, actually started, and it lasted one year, a national summer school for History teachers of distinction...this was fully funded to take 200 teachers from around Australia to Canberra. Intensive talks, intensive discussions, museum visits, cultural precincts. It was brilliant. That was an example of what they could do well, but the funding got cut after one year. (SA3T)

This participant demonstrated how the involvement of the Commonwealth in History education, through providing learning opportunities rather than participating in curriculum development could have a positive influence. If, however, the Commonwealth Government or state governments are not favoured by all participants to determine the curriculum, the question still remained: Who, in their opinions, should determine the history curriculum?

8.5.2 Who in Principle Should Determine the History Curriculum?

In general, there were varied opinions on who should determine the *ACHistory* if this was not a suitable role for the Commonwealth Government. It should, however, be noted that seven adult participants, four parents and three teachers, did believe that the Commonwealth Government should have a role in the process. Many, however, argued for a higher level of school influence in determining the curriculum, not just implementing it. This opinion, that teachers and schools deserved a higher level of contribution to the actual formation of the curriculum, was present in the views put forward by parents, teachers, and students.

Some participants put forward the view that the *ACHistory* should be determined by a panel of experienced educators and university historians. Specifically, three teacher participants believed that historians, academics or history experts should have a role (SA1T, SA2T, SA3T), while four others held that teachers were in the best position to determine the curriculum. The need for community consensus was raised by one teacher (SA3T), and another raised the possibility of consulting students.

C: Who do you think should determine what is included in the history curriculum?

A group of specialist teachers, I suppose. A group of people who have been teaching History for a long, long time. I think if you left it for the students to decide you might get some interesting responses, but it would probably be good to get their ideas or views. Perhaps, university specialists that have degrees in this sort of area (SA4T)

This view, that teachers and experts were in the best position to determine the curriculum, was reflected in the views of three parent participants (SA3P3, SA4P, WA1P) as well.

So, I guess in general, it would be experienced educators who have a long history of History. You know, who understand, they would have seen curriculum changing so many times over the last decades I'm sure and hopefully those people once they get to those senior roles [of] actually setting a curriculum would have a pretty good idea of what works and what's most effective. Not only at school, but going into workplaces as well. (SA3P3)

This parent, who was quoted in the previous section, held the opinion that the Commonwealth Government should not be involved, because “that just brings to mind communist China or somewhere, or you know, a skewed version of history. That's what the risk is with any government dictating what is taught in History”

(SA3P3). As can be seen from this statement, she held a strong opinion on this topic.

In contrast to her view, one parent (SA2P) held that there was a role for the Commonwealth Government in the process of determining content. However, he felt that teachers and schools also deserved some input. It should be noted that two parents (SA4P, SA3P1) did not express any opinion on who should determine the content of the curriculum.

While some students recognised the role the Commonwealth Government played in determining the *ACHistory* as useful (WA3, SA2), many others were very opposed to the idea of the Commonwealth Government being involved. However, this view in some cases could have been due largely due to the anti-government sentiment some students felt. As one student explained, “I just don’t like the government. They’re stupid” (SA1). Another student in a different school similarly replied, when asked about the Commonwealth Government having some input into what they learned, “It’s stupid” (SA4). Others who were not keen on the Commonwealth Government involvement in the *ACHistory* felt that state governments were in a better position to determine what students needed to learn (WA1). These students seemed to feel a disconnection between the Commonwealth Government and themselves. While they thought that the Commonwealth Government should have a general idea on what they were taught, they did not want the Commonwealth Government to dictate what they learnt as “they are all the way over there and we might need to learn about different things in different states” (SA5).

Instead, some students when asked who should decide what they were taught in History lessons felt that this should be decided by their teachers, with some input from themselves and their parents (V1, WA1, WA3, SA1, SA2, SA4, SA5). One student (SA2) stated that “I think we’re the ones that are learning it, we should be able to have the most say”. While most students thought they deserved to be offered the chance to give their opinions, predominantly students seemed to think the decision should for the most part rest with their teachers. Despite this, a few student groups (V1, WA2, WA3), did believe there was still a role for the Commonwealth Government in deciding what they should learn in History.

While not the predominant view, several participants (V1T, SA3T, SA3P3) strongly held the view the Commonwealth Government should either not be involved in determining the *ACHistory* at all or should only be permitted a minor role. This view emerged across all stakeholder groups, including students, with individual participants sharing this opinion. This shows that for these participants the involvement of Commonwealth Government and federal politicians was viewed negatively.

8.5.3 Post-Review Differences in State Curriculum Documents

As mentioned previously, differences in the History curriculum implemented in each state examined in this project existed. As noted in one article on *The Conversation*, “The emergence of state and territory hybrids means there are now multiple versions of the Australian Curriculum operating across the nation, rather than one homogenous version” (Adoniou, Loudon & Savage, 2015).

Differences between the History curricula used in each state provide evidence that the approach used for implementing and developing a national History curriculum did not result in the Commonwealth Government dictating to the states and territories, but instead resulted in states adapting and modifying the *ACHistory*. These differences in curriculum between each state included the content covered at each year level, the structure of the curriculum and assessment points, and even the aims or purpose History is given in each state. The purpose or aim of the *ACHistory*, as stated on the website version 7.5, was to “ensure that students develop”:

- interest in, and enjoyment of, historical study for lifelong learning and work, including their capacity and willingness to be informed and active citizens
- knowledge, understanding and appreciation of the past and the forces that shape societies, including Australian society
- understanding and use of historical concepts, such as evidence, continuity and change, cause and effect, perspectives, empathy, significance and contestability
- capacity to undertake historical inquiry, including skills in the analysis and use of sources, and in explanation and communication.

(Australian Curriculum, 2015a)

These aims were not necessarily inconsistent with the aims of the state-based adaptations, but variations between these stated aims provided an interesting point of difference, particularly in one case. The state adaptations used in Victoria and Western Australia are discussed separately in this section.

8.5.3.1 Victorian Curriculum

In January 2017 state and catholic schools in Victoria moved to use the Victorian Curriculum. This replaced the AusVELS curriculum which was in place from

2013 to 2016 for Foundation to Year 10 in Victorian schools. Independent schools in Victoria were able to use the Victorian Curriculum as a guide if they desired (VCAA, n.d.a).

The main point of difference between the Victorian Curriculum and the *ACHistory* was the way it was structured with five bands of achievement standards in History that students work towards across year levels, rather than needing to meet one each year. The Victorian Curriculum website states that

The Victorian Curriculum F–10 is structured as a continuum across levels of learning achievement not years of schooling. This enables the development of targeted learning programs for all students, where the curriculum is used to plan in relation to the actual learning level of each student rather than their assumed level of learning based on age. (Victorian Curriculum, 2017)

This adaptation was praised by the one Victorian teacher who took part in this study, as she felt it provided teachers with greater flexibility than was afforded them under the previous AusVELS curriculum. This teacher was asked about any differences she had noticed in content choices after she commented that most schools, rather than selecting topics that could relate to the background of some of their students from diverse backgrounds, were instead “stuck with the ones that link to VELs, because they have the resources for them” (V1T).

C: With the change from AusVELS to the Victorian Curriculum have you noticed much of a difference in choices or is it fairly similar?

There are quite a few changes, but there’s actually a lot more flexibility with the Victorian Curriculum, because they’re now covering, rather than having set years, they have an 8 and 9 curriculum and a 9 and 10. So you do have that option to choose what topics you do and in what depth and in what years. So that gives you a little bit more flexibility. I do think one benefit of the Australian Curriculum is that [now] they do have an ancient indigenous history topic, which I think is really fantastic. (V1T)

The comments from this teacher stood in contrast to the one History Teachers' Association member who commented on the Victorian Curriculum. In his opinion the adaptation of the Australian Curriculum was the one that he was

really conscious of and care[d] a great deal for teachers there in Victoria. With the VELS and their process... there seems to be rigidity. There seems to be a lack of flexibility and that's really disappointing... and that's even reflected in the senior curriculum. They are precious about the Revolution, they can't let it go. (HTASA)

This demonstrated the different opinions expressed about the same document, particularly in relation to the options it provided for teachers and students. Only one of these participants was teaching in Victoria and this may have caused the difference in opinion between the two.

Another key change in the Victorian Curriculum was the capabilities that students were expected to develop, not just in History, but in all subject areas.

The Victorian Curriculum F–10 includes capabilities, which are a set of discrete knowledge and skills that can and should be taught explicitly in and through the learning areas, but are not fully defined by any of the learning areas or disciplines. A key distinction between the Australian Curriculum F–10 and the Victorian Curriculum F–10 is the provision of content descriptions and achievement standards in the four capabilities. (Victorian Curriculum, 2017)

The four capabilities included in the Victorian Curriculum, which were consistent with the Australian Curriculum were: Critical and Creative Thinking, Ethical, Intercultural, Personal and Social. However, while the Australian Curriculum includes three more capabilities, Literacy, Numeracy and Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), “The Victorian Curriculum F–10 design

does not include these three general capabilities as separate learning areas or capabilities with discrete knowledge and skills” (Victorian Curriculum, 2017). While this difference between the Victorian and Australian Curriculum was not specific to History, it did demonstrate the various changes that had taken place.

Depth studies in the Victorian Curriculum were generally consistent with the Australian Curriculum. Depth studies were presented as being available for each band, so for instance Years 9 and 10, teachers were able to teach from possible combined depth studies that, in the *ACHistory*, would be assigned to just one specific year level. Some choice in depth study topics were different to those offered under the Victorian Curriculum, with “Political crisis” offered as a depth study choice in “The globalising world” unit, but not under the *ACHistory*, while “Progressive ideas and movements (1750-1918)” included in the *ACHistory*’s “Making a better world?” was not listed under the Victorian Curriculum (VCAA, n.d.b). Overall, there were still choices available for Victorian teachers, so this element of the *ACHistory* was still maintained with the move to the Victorian Curriculum.

As the Victorian Curriculum overview stated,

The Victorian Curriculum F–10 incorporates and reflects much of the Australian Curriculum F–10, but differs in some important respects, most notably the representation of the curriculum as a continuum of learning and the structural design. (VCAA, n.d.b).

The aims of the Victorian Curriculum History syllabus, however, remained consistent with the *ACHistory*.

8.5.3.2 Western Australian Curriculum

In a similar move to Victoria, Western Australia chose to adapt the Australian Curriculum to suit the context of their state and the needs of their students. The Western Australian Curriculum website stated that “The Western Australian syllabuses remain broadly consistent with the Australian Curriculum but have been contextualised to make them more suitable for Western Australian students and teachers” (SCSA, 2014).

In Western Australia, History was one area of study within a broader subject called Humanities and Social Sciences (HASS). On the Australian Curriculum Version 8 website, History was grouped under a learning area of the same name, HASS. While History was merged with other subjects in this learning area in the primary years, an achievement standard for each subject was maintained under the Australian Curriculum. From Years 7 to 10, History was still treated as a separate subject under the Australian Curriculum, unlike its treatment under the Western Australian Curriculum. The Western Australian Curriculum, like the Victorian Curriculum, also split the sequencing and descriptions of skills into five bands to “assist in multi-age programming by providing a common skill focus for the teaching and learning of the knowledge and understanding content” (SCSA, 2014).

The aims provided on the Western Australian Curriculum website, as a result of the move to HASS across the F-10 curriculum, were not specific to just History, but instead covered all subjects in this learning area. They stated that HASS aimed to “develop in students”:

- a deep knowledge and sense of wonder, curiosity and respect for places, people, cultures, events, ideas and environments throughout the world
- a lifelong sense of belonging to, and engagement with, civic life, with the capacity and willingness to be informed, responsible, ethical and active participants in society at a local, national and global scale
- a knowledge, understanding and an appreciation of the past and the forces that shape society
- the ability to think critically, solve problems, make informed decisions and propose actions in relation to real-world events and issues
- enterprising behaviours and capabilities that enable them to be active participants and decision-makers in matters affecting them, which can be transferred into life, work and business opportunities
- an understanding of, and commitment to, the concepts of sustainability to bring about equity and social justice
- a knowledge and understanding of the connections among the peoples of Asia, Australia and the rest of the world.

(SCSA, 2014)

Considering the move to HASS away from History as a discrete subject, this adaptation of the aims from these subjects was understandable, but does demonstrate the difference between it and the *ACHistory*. Of the aims listed above, only the third aim shared its wording specifically with the *ACHistory*. It was interesting that (although not necessarily indicative of anything) the words “including Australian society”, which were present in the *ACHistory*, were absent from the Western Australian version.

The removal of depth study options that were available under the *ACHistory* resulted in the standardisation of depth studies across Western Australia with each school covering the same topics. While this may potentially have some benefits in terms of resources, with teachers in Western Australia able to hone and share their

resources with others in their state, one teacher involved in this study noted that the differences in curriculum between each state made it difficult for publishers to cater for each one. On resourcing and the move to the Western Australian curriculum he explained,

I actually think it's going to make it harder because there are differences between the states. I think it will be more challenging because if you're a national publisher, how do you cater for those differences in a marketable way and a cost-effective way? I've had a couple of discussions with publishers and I think they're scratching their heads, and to a point, playing catch up to where education ministers have taken things. And I think that's been a problem because schools then, I mean we've been writing some in house resources, because we couldn't find anything that was cost effective for our school's context. But that seems to be changing, but how much it changes, yeah, we'll wait and see. (WA3T)

These comments pointed to one of the potential challenges associated with multiple variations of the *ACHistory* across the nation. This teacher, however, did seem hopeful that this challenge could be overcome in the future.

8.5.4 A National Direction?

There still seemed to remain a feeling amongst some participants that a national approach to History teaching, with a centrally determined curriculum, was not necessarily the right direction for all Australian schools.

Schools should have more independence. I was disillusioned with the Australian Curriculum, it seemed to be based a lot on the NSW curriculum. The Reformation doesn't fit in. I don't mind decentralisation with state-based History curriculum. Diversity across the country isn't a bad thing. (WA2T)

Along with this, there is also the perception amongst some teachers, as was seen in the previous quotation, that the *ACHistory* was largely the imposition of a New South Wales (NSW) curriculum on the other states.

My belief of how the curriculum was reviewed basically extends from the New South Wales curriculum that was fairly strictly adhered to without New South Wales actually bending, shall we say, to the views of other states, so we've had a number of books over the period I've been teaching, all have been updates of the previous book with some extra ideas attached or some, as I said before, where we've had a disconnected event, but in reality we're just flowing on. (SA2T)

This belief that the other states were required to compromise to a greater extent than NSW, may have led to some of the less than positive feelings of teachers in the smaller states towards the Australian Curriculum and the pursuit of a national curriculum.

However, as generally seems to be the case in this study, overall there was not a consensus amongst participants about a national approach to History education with two parents (WA1P, SA3P1) offering an alternative view and both preferring a more unified approach than is currently provided. In the words of one of these parents: "I think they should all combine together and work together, to be honest. I'm not keen on this state decides this and federal does this. I think they all need to combine together". (SA3P1)

Overall, it seemed clear that while debate about Australia having a national History curriculum had died down, there still remained a number of people, including potentially state governments, who were somewhat resistant to the idea.

8.6 Summary

The role of the Commonwealth Government in school History education, and education more generally, has increased over recent decades, culminating in the release of the *ACHistory*. The involvement of Commonwealth Government, particularly with the announcement of the 2014 review, led to some concerns about politicisation and the way this could influence the direction of the *ACHistory* going forward.

Despite initial concern evident in the media about the possibility of the curriculum 2014 review being used for political purposes by federal politicians, teachers did not report any noticeable changes in the way they were presenting History to their students as a result of the review's findings. Generally, changes made to the *ACHistory* as a result of the 2014 review seemed not to have been a concern for teacher participants, suggesting that politicisation was not currently an issue.

While there seem to be mixed views on whether federal politicians and the Commonwealth Government had influenced the current *ACHistory* in terms of ideological leanings, the possibility that they may be able to in the future could be seen to have influenced the feelings of some participants towards the Commonwealth Government's involvement in determining the *ACHistory*.

Participants generally seemed to prefer that the *ACHistory* be determined by experts, but some could see a role for the Commonwealth Government in terms of policy and supervision. The involvement of the Commonwealth Government in the creation of a national History curriculum was viewed by some participants as necessary to some extent, but the setting of the content of the curriculum was

considered to be more a role that should be filled by teachers and history experts rather than politicians. Some participants held the view that the setting of the *ACHistory* was an area that the Commonwealth Government should not be involved at all.

CHAPTER NINE

ADJUSTING THE BALANCE OF COMMONWEALTH-STATE RELATIONSHIP THROUGH IMPLEMENTATION

9.1 Introduction

With the release and implementation of the *Australian Curriculum: History (ACHistory)*, the direction of History education in Australian schools was changed, in a fundamental way, from the state-based approaches used before. This change to direct Commonwealth Government intervention into what students were taught generated a lot of commentary in the media and amongst academics and politicians. The intention of this research was to discover how and where the views of key stakeholders both complemented and diverged from those presented by academics and the media. This concluding chapter starts with a brief overview of the key findings that emerged both from the participant data and the media and academic articles used in the triangulation. These findings are then used to discuss implications for the future of History teaching in Australia under a national approach, as well as the balance of responsibilities between the Commonwealth and state governments in relation to what is actually taught in schools.

9.2 Summary of the Purpose and Findings of the Research

The purpose of this study, as noted, was to discover how far the views held by key educational stakeholders, parents, teachers, and students in three states in relation to the *ACHistory* and its implementation were comparable to those articles published in the media and academic journals around the same time. A key finding was the difference between what the school stakeholders saw as important issues for the teaching of History and the issues that were reported in media articles. The views presented in the media, for the most part, did not reflect the views of the school stakeholders. For instance, the main purpose of History presented in the media seemed to be to develop national pride, however, this was just one purpose among several identified by school stakeholders. Another example was the push in the media for a greater emphasis on Australian history, including the achievements of Western civilisation. While school stakeholders valued Australian history, they did not see a need for an increase in this type of content.

This research was intended to look at how the *ACHistory* was able to influence the values and content taught in classrooms and whether or not it was, in the opinions of school stakeholders, able in its current form to cater for the diversity amongst students and the differing views within Australian society. One potential issue that was identified at the beginning of this thesis was the possibility that perceptions of politicisation of the *ACHistory* might have led to negative feelings associated with the curriculum and a resultant lack of valuation for the subject in the eyes of key stakeholders. This problem was identified due to the criticisms directed by federal politicians towards the curriculum and further, due to the criticism and speculation that emerged surrounding the 2014 review and its motives. This thesis had the aim

of exploring how various educational stakeholders had helped to shape the formation of the new *ACHistory* and to examine the issue of the politicisation of the history curriculum and whether this was an issue within Australian schools.

This thesis posed the questions:

5. What did the school stakeholders in the three states see as the purposes of History education in Australia? How did their views compare with those expressed in media and academic articles and why?
6. How far did the school stakeholders consider they had contributed to the process of developing the *ACHistory* and to what extent did they feel that it had become politicised? How different were the views expressed by academic and media writers and why?
7. How did school stakeholders evaluate the Australian history topics in the Year 9 and 10 levels of the *ACHistory* and how successful did they consider the new curriculum to be in catering for the diversity of student backgrounds and experiences in the three states investigated?
8. What differences were evident among the stakeholders from the three states in their attitudes to the *ACHistory*? What factors explain the modifications to the *ACHistory* introduced by the three states during the implementation stage?

This research was a small-scale qualitative study that made use of individual interviews and student focus groups to compile responses of a small number of school stakeholders, in this case parents, teachers, students and History Teachers' Association members. These data were then triangulated against the data found in academic writings and in media articles, to establish whether the views found in these sources was comparable to the opinions of the key stakeholders.

Differences did emerge between the way History was presented in the media articles and how it was viewed by the school stakeholders. For instance, there was a push in the media for a greater emphasis on Australian history, including the achievements of Western civilisation. While school stakeholders valued Australian history, they did not see a need for an increase in this type of content. Another example was the purpose assigned to History. The main purpose of History presented in the media seemed to be to develop national pride, however, this was just one purpose among several identified by school stakeholders.

Participants proposed several purposes for History education in Australian schools. While they did not all agree on one key purpose, they did all seem to agree that the subject held value and should be taught in Australian schools. Suggested purposes behind History included the development of national pride and a shared national identity, the development of informed citizens who would go on to participate in Australia's democratic system, and the potential to learn from the past by remembering past mistakes and actions. The relevance of studying History for future career goals was not always apparent to students or their parents, however, for teachers and History Teachers' Association members this was another purpose for teaching History.

In comparison to the views of participants, the media and peer-reviewed articles emphasised different purposes. For instance, while the development of national pride and identification was mentioned by participants, it was given much greater emphasis in media articles, which seemed to promote it as the main purpose. Likewise, national identification and the development of skills were mentioned

both in the peer-reviewed articles and by participants, however, there seemed to be a greater importance placed on skills in the peer-reviewed articles than in participant responses.

In relation to the second research question it was found that there was no clear consensus among the participants on whether the *ACHistory* was considered politicised, with participants who did notice a particular political leaning in the content in disagreement about which political ideology the curriculum favoured. There was also a lack of consensus about whether the process behind the development of the *ACHistory* was viewed as politically influenced, although generally most participants who were aware of the 2014 review considered it either a wholly political exercise or at least politically influenced (HTAWA, SA1T). Overall, there was some concern expressed about the possibility that the *ACHistory* could become politically motivated in the future. While the politicisation of the *ACHistory* was a concern for some participants, for others it was not an issue they had considered before taking part in this study. Despite the potential politicisation of the current *ACHistory* being a concern that was apparent for academics, such as Taylor and Collins (2012a), the same level of concern was not evident among the participants. Overall, participants noted that they would prefer that the content of the curriculum was determined by historians and experienced teachers, with minimal involvement or commentary from politicians, other than in an overseeing role.

This was comparable to the views shown in academic writing that demonstrated a perception amongst some academics that the *ACHistory* was inevitably politicised due to its role in telling the political stories of both the Left and Right side of

politics (Taylor & Collins, 2012a). This view was shared by journalist Aly (2010) in one opinion piece, where he described “meddling with the curriculum” as “an inescapably political, often ideological, exercise”. In contrast, articles in the media generally seemed more concerned with the content of the curriculum than anything else, but this focus on content often demonstrated particular political leanings, with many calls for a focus on specific aspects of Australian history appearing in opinion pieces and reports (Coorey, 2010; Bantick, 2011; Blake, 2013, Crowe, 2014; Donnelly, 2018; Fox Koob, 2014, Hurst, 2014).

Likewise, there was disagreement amongst the participants over how well the curriculum catered for the diverse backgrounds and needs of Australian students. Several teachers felt that the *ACHistory* did not cater for the diversity of student backgrounds and views in their classrooms. These teachers came from schools with students from many different cultural backgrounds. This was also the case for one teacher who came from a religious school and who felt the views and backgrounds of his students were not catered for in the curriculum. The responses of students and parents to whether they felt that their family background was considered by the curriculum provided mixed responses depending on their heritage. In contrast, some teachers and History Teachers’ Association members held that, while the curriculum did a reasonable job at catering for diversity, accommodating the needs of diverse student groups was the role of the classroom teacher, not the curriculum. The diversity of Australian students was not often a consideration in the many media articles that called for a greater inclusion of Australian history, or was even dismissed in those articles in favour of a Western focus, due to the ideology promoted by former Prime Minister John Howard, that “It is a fact that the modern Australia is a product of Western civilisation... We

cannot properly understand our nation's history without fully recognising that this is the case" (Shanahan, 2012). This view was partially evident in the responses of participants who believed that Australian history was an important area of study, but most preferred the broader world history course that allowed students to study different parts of the world as well.

Finally, most participants in this study did not take part in the development process for the *ACHistory*, with no parents or students taking part. However, the process of developing the *ACHistory* was viewed positively by those participants, teachers and History Teachers' Association members, who took part in the consultation. While there was some acknowledgement that the key points that participants in the consultation process put forward as important did not always make their way into the final draft, the process was generally considered comprehensive. One criticism that emerged was the inclusion in the process of certain lobby or interest groups that some participants felt did not deserve as big a say as they were given. While the 2014 review did provide the opportunity for stakeholder groups to provide feedback on the curriculum, it emerged that most parents in this study were not aware at the time that this was possible. Two teachers did provide submissions to the 2014 review, but the feeling prevailing amongst teacher participants was that their views were, in the end, irrelevant to the process, meaning that they felt their influence on the process was limited. The participants in the various stakeholder groups showed a preference for the curriculum to be set by historians and experienced teachers, with minimal involvement or commentary from politicians. This preference was present in the responses from parents, teachers and students in the three states. It also reflected

some of the academic and media commentary that questioned the benefits of federal politicians commenting on or influencing the *ACHistory*.

9.3 Relationships with Previous Research and Key Themes

In the course of carrying out this study, several key themes emerged in addition to the research questions. This section examines these themes in relation to the data collected in this study and found through media and academic articles.

9.3.1 Purpose of History Education

Some of the different interpretations of history that exist were evident in the debate surrounding the History curriculum. This could be seen through the desire on one side to increase the focus on “the achievements of western civilisation” (Donnelly, 2010a). Further, there appeared to be an element of fear that school History education could be used to convince children to subscribe to a particular view of Australia’s past. These different interpretations of history, along with associated fears about how History might have been used, could be seen to have influenced the way the *ACHistory* was viewed, particularly by the media.

There are multiple purposes for providing students with an education in History. Each of these purposes favours the inclusion of different elements in the curriculum, whether this is a focus on specific content, such as national history, or particular skills, such as analysis. Each purpose potentially favours a particular approach over the others as they aim to achieve different outcomes, such as developing informed democratic citizens or promoting national unity. The purposes behind History education could also be linked back to the different

interpretations of history, with those who prefer a nationalistic approach seeming to prefer a Whiggish curriculum that focuses on the inclusion of specific content.

When considering the *ACHistory* and the push for a national History curriculum in Australia, inconsistencies about why a national curriculum was desirable and the purpose it was meant to serve, emerged. This was most prominently seen through the struggle between content and skills, over which deserves to be the focal point in the curriculum (Peterson, 2016; Martin, 2016). While skills were given preference by many teachers, the content of the curriculum and what “facts” or perspectives students were taught seemed to serve as the main point of contention for many politicians and the media (Bantick, 2011; Howard, 2012; Berg, 2011, Hurst, 2014, Koelma, 2014a). This contrast between skills and content was particularly apparent in articles reporting the opinions of Christopher Pyne, other Coalition politicians, and the two reviewers. The focus they generally advocated in the History curriculum was particular elements of Australian history, while the attempt to turn students in “historiographers” were decried (Wiltshire, 2017). While this balance between skills and content was not always explicitly mentioned by participants, on several occasions the teachers in this study (V1T, SA3T) mentioned skills in relation to History teaching. Although several teachers demonstrated a preference for skills over content, this did not mean they were not concerned about the content taught.

This competition for primacy between content and skills in the *ACHistory* can be linked back to the purpose that is given for providing History education in schools. The promotion of nationalism and patriotism as a principal purpose for History schooling would, for instance, favour content over skills, as this would

promote a particular story of the nation that encourages these two values (Martin, 2016). In contrast, if the main purpose favoured for producing a national *ACHistory* was instead determined to be the creation of informed citizens, skills would instead be favoured, as historical skills promoted critical judgement of various sources of evidence (Martin, 2016).

9.3.2 The Process of Developing the *Australian Curriculum: History*

At first glance, the process of developing the *ACHistory* did not seem to generate a lot of criticism in the literature. Instead, most criticism seemed to be directed at the content and structure of the Australia Curriculum. This was most noticeable in media articles written about the *ACHistory*. While not directed specifically at the development process, this did indicate a possible lack of confidence in the process to deliver a “balanced” History curriculum.

The development process included four phases, each related to one another. These phases were “shaping”, “writing”, “implementation”, and “monitoring and evaluation” (ACARA, 2012). Criticisms levelled at the development process included the comparatively small amount of time made available for consultation and the limits this placed on discussions (Atweh & Singh, 2011); a lack of consideration for the amount of time needed to teach the course (Kiem, 2011); the need for professional development and pre-service teacher training (Taylor, 2010; Atweh & Singh, 2011); and finally the way the initial individual learning areas were developed, without due consideration for the remaining learning areas that needed development in later years (Reid, 2009). Criticisms of the outcome of this process seemed to culminate in the announcement of the 2014 review (Pyne,

2014). This was seen, as already noted earlier in this chapter, as a political exercise by some participants.

Like the views seen in the media and in academic articles, the opinions of participants on the development process were mixed. Although there were some criticisms expressed, there seemed to be a general acceptance that, due to the need to balance the views of multiple stakeholder groups from each state, the process used to develop the *ACHistory* was adequate.

While the development and consultation processes used to produce the initial *ACHistory* were not perfect, overall, they could be regarded as adequate, considering the range of needs from multiple states and stakeholders that needed to be balanced. A lack of confidence in the process seemed to be implied in the criticism directed at the curriculum by the conservative politicians and media commentators, yet amongst the participants of this study, no major complaints emerged in relation to the process of developing the *ACHistory*.

9.3.3 Australian History, Multiculturalism and Diversity

Australian history has a place within the *ACHistory*. Australian history was considered an important aspect of the *ACHistory* by the majority of participants and also seemed to gain attention, in the media and in academic writing, as a worthwhile area that Australian students should have a good knowledge of. Despite the accepted importance of Australian history, it is possible that the approach taken to the area may need to be reconsidered to better cater for the engagement of students. Repetition remained an issue for students who participated in this study despite attempts that were made with the national

curriculum to reduce the amount of repeated material. The possibility of exploring different areas of Australian history was raised by several participants. Options that participants in this study suggested included a greater inclusion of local history at the secondary level, and one group of students (SA3) expressed an interest in indigenous history from pre-settlement.

The views on the teaching of Australian history were generally linked to the purpose each participant felt was behind the teaching of history more generally. While the teaching of Australian history was considered important, the perspective from which this history was taught, the content included, and the amount of time it gained in the classroom were contested issues. Australian history was only one component of the *Australian Curriculum: History*, but it was an area that received attention from many commentators, such as politicians like Christopher Pyne and John Howard. Overall, Australian history, as stated already, despite criticisms regarding the focus on certain aspects and the unwelcome repetition, was viewed by most participants as an important area of study. The amount of commentary Australian history received in both the media and academic writing further supported the idea that it was considered important.

In relation to the way the *ACHistory* was viewed by the other key group of school stakeholders, the students, the findings of this project seemed to relate in particular to the work of Clark (2008). This study found that despite the introduction of a national curriculum, the views of the Australian students who participated in this study in regards to Australian history, in particular, had not noticeably shifted since Clark's ground-breaking study. This suggested that new strategies were still needed, if students were to be engaged with this topic. While

some students did express interest in the later units on Indigenous history in Year 10, the study of traditional Australian history units, such as settlement, were still negatively viewed by students who felt that it emerged as a topic of study far too often in their experience. Despite this view that Australian history was often repeated being apparently widespread amongst the students involved in this study, the majority viewed it as an important area of history to study and some felt there was room for further teaching of Australian history in specific areas, such as Indigenous history before settlement.

9.3.4 The Increasing Role of the Commonwealth Government in History Education

The role of the Commonwealth Government in History education has increased in recent years, first with John Howard's national History curriculum initiative and then with the development of the Australian Curriculum. This involvement by federal politicians led to fears of politicisation in regards to the *ACHistory*. Although the extent of their involvement was often limited to comments in the media about the quality of the curriculum, the announcement of the 2014 review and the appointment of the two particular reviewers, strengthened concerns that politicisation was a strong possibility. In the end, the recommendations of the 2014 review were not as drastic as feared, yet the review, in general, did highlight some of the risks associated with the possible involvement of the Commonwealth Government in History education.

Related to the politics surrounding the *ACHistory* was the evolving relationship between the state and federal levels of government over the course of the whole process. Although this was linked directly to the views on the development

process of the *ACHistory*, and the evolution of education in Australia more generally, at a deeper level, it could be argued that it was the change in the state and federal relationship that led to the Commonwealth Government's involvement in developing the *ACHistory*. The shift in the relationship between these two levels of government was seen through the development process used to produce the Australian Curriculum, when previously, even though meetings between states were held, each state was left to develop its own curriculum (Marsh, 2010). The increased involvement of the Commonwealth Government in the development of the *ACHistory* was viewed both positively and negatively by participants.

While the Australian Curriculum was considered a national curriculum, differences between state adaptations of the curriculum have led to speculation about just how national the curriculum really was. The need for a national curriculum was neglected in discussions in favour of a focus on the structure and content (Atweh and Singh, 2011). Those states that moved to a hybrid between state-based curricula and the national curriculum, such as Western Australia and Victoria in this study, founded their curriculums on the Australian Curriculum, but the slight differences that have emerged meant that the History curriculum taught to students in each state was not entirely consistent. It was clear that a considerable amount of time and effort had been used to develop and implement the curriculum; nevertheless, Brennan's comment from 2011 below still appeared to be relevant in 2018.

Despite the undoubted goodwill and hard work that has gone into getting national curriculum into its current state, national curriculum in Australia is in dire need of new, long-term agreements with the profession, the states and territories and with the potential to engage community. Unless these

new agreements come into being, governance of curriculum is likely to limp along, continually in the media eye as a bone of contention between states, overly reliant on election cycles and unable to resource new curriculum directions for Australia's future. (Brennan, 2011, 277)

This comment seemed to have been proven accurate with commentary emerging in the media once more in early 2018, as Victoria prepared for a state election later that year (Victorian Electoral Commission, 2016).

However, these differences in curriculum between each state were also a reflection of the relationship between the states and Commonwealth and the balance that had been achieved in the *ACHistory* negotiations. It seems evident that the states retained the ability to adapt and modify the History curriculum for the students in their schools, rather than being dictated to by the Commonwealth Government (Brennan, 2011).

It could be argued in fact, that the implementation stage of the *ACHistory* has to some extent, tipped the balance of Commonwealth-state responsibilities back towards the states. At the end of the development process, the teaching is actually done in schools. The establishment and maintenance of schools, their organisation and staffing, remain the responsibilities of the state governments and other jurisdictions, such as Catholic or Lutheran systems, and school councils in the case of Independent schools. Moreover, there is no evidence that the Commonwealth is seeking to take over this aspect of schooling. A number of states and jurisdictions have made use of their authority over what happens in schools to make adjustments to the *ACHistory* in order to suit the contexts of their schools.

9.4 Implications of the Findings

The main implication of these findings was that there was still a lack of consensus amongst Australians about what Australian students should be taught in History. This was perhaps apparent in the inclination in some states to adapt the curriculum to “suit the needs” of the students in their state. This demonstrated a lack of clear direction amongst the states, with some deciding that the needs of their students were divergent, even in minor ways, from those of students in other states. While in practice there is a large depth of consistency between the states and territories in terms of History education, it would not be accurate at this stage to describe the Australian Curriculum as a “national curriculum”. The *ACHistory* can be seen as a large step forward in achieving a national History curriculum, but at the stage of researching this thesis, fragmentation between the states had already begun occurring. Another thing to note, was that while amongst some participants in this study there was certainly some support for a national History curriculum, amongst others there was still a belief that a national curriculum was not needed and was potentially restricting students in the secondary years from being able to make connections with their home states. This suggests that more information on the benefits of a national curriculum was needed to encourage support for the curriculum, and that provisions to allow the inclusion of further state-based topics, or topics that specifically suit a particular school context, would potentially be welcomed in schools.

The contribution of this project to research lies chiefly in the exploration of the views of those stakeholders most affected by the introduction of the *ACHistory*. With the *ACHistory* offering, at least in theory, a new national approach to History education, the views of teachers, parents and student were important for

providing an understanding of how, if at all, the subject is valued by those most affected by it. The views of these stakeholders offered valuable insights into how successfully the subject had been implemented in classrooms, as well as some of the concerns surrounding both the implementation and the review processes.

This study confirms earlier findings on student views, in particular. Despite the introduction of the *ACHistory* and presumably a change in approach since Clark's (2008) study, some students were still expressing boredom and frustration when it came to Australian history, suggesting that further reflection is still needed to develop approaches which excite these students.

9.5 Recommendations for Future Research or Action

One suggestion that was raised by a participant in this study was the need for a national conversation on the purpose of and direction for History education in Australia. While conversations did occur during the development process, the predominant focus of these conversations was on the content and structure of the curriculum. This proposed national conversation would help to clarify what is hoped to be achieved by a national curriculum and could help to end some of the divergence in direction that is currently occurring amongst the states.

As noted, this was a small-scale qualitative research project. This meant that the views expressed by participants could not be generalised, but were instead specific to these participants and the school contexts that they were involved with. While these opinions could not be generalised, they did provide some insight into how the *ACHistory* was viewed in some schools and offered some directions for future studies to investigate. A broader quantitative study would be required to

discover how widespread these opinions and views were amongst Australian schooling communities, but this study does offer some potential areas to investigate in the future, such as the views of key stakeholders on the political involvement in the subject and the link to the subject's success.

Much of this thesis has been concerned with the voices of students, parents and teachers. These three stakeholders, along with the History Teachers' Associations, are arguably those most affected by what is taught in History classrooms. From the teachers who are on the ground engaging students in historical discussions and encouraging them to investigate the past, the parents who want the best for their children and their educations, to the students who are required to sit through history lessons, regardless of their interest levels. All these groups were included to some extent in the development process or had some opportunity to comment during the 2014 review, if only they had been aware of it. However, the extent to which they felt their opinions mattered in comparison to other groups, was an important component behind how some participants felt about, not just the *ACHistory*, but education more generally.

Regular review of the Australian Curriculum and its implementation was listed as the final phase of the development process, referred to as "monitoring and evaluation" (ACARA, 2012, 7); including these school stakeholder groups and ensuring that they felt listened to is just one possible goal for ACARA to achieve going forward. By listening to the concerns and views of these stakeholders, it can be hoped that the *ACHistory* will provide, going into the future, opportunities for schools to further cater to their individual contexts at the secondary level, while

still maintaining a level of standardisation that would ensure all Australian students leave school with some understanding of history.

9.6 Final Reflections

This study used a distinctive methodology that asked participants about their thoughts on the purpose, process, and the content of the *ACHistory*. This approach, which involved visiting individual schools in Victoria, South Australia, and Western Australia, was worthwhile in that it produced a large quantity of useful and insightful data, but was extremely time consuming. In future, if similar research projects are pursued, the use of electronic means of communicating with participants, such as Skype, could be useful in reducing travel time, and removing the need to conduct all focus groups and interviews at the one school all in the one day.

The large amount of red tape that needed to be cut through in order to include students in this study was daunting; however, the insights that students gave were worthwhile in that they provided a snapshot on their likes and dislikes, and their valuation of History as a subject, information that is challenging, if not impossible, to gather without the direct involvement of the students themselves.

History teaching is a contentious issue, with the subject seen as a pathway to shaping the minds of the young. While there are certain topics that students, teachers, parents, and even politicians are in agreement that students should know about, it seems that if, in the students' views, these topics are repeated too frequently, they then lose their appeal, regardless of how important these topics may seem to their parents and teachers.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Human Research Ethics Committee Approval



RESEARCH BRANCH
OFFICE OF RESEARCH ETHICS, COMPLIANCE
AND INTEGRITY

LEVEL 1, 115 GRENPELL STREET
THE UNIVERSITY OF ADELAIDE
SA 5005 AUSTRALIA

TELEPHONE +61 8 2013 5137
FACSIMILE +61 8 2013 3700
EMAIL hrm@adelaide.edu.au

CRICOS Provider Number 00123M

2 July 2015

Dr M Secombe
School of Education

Dear Dr Secombe

ETHICS APPROVAL No: H-2015-142

PROJECT TITLE: **The Australian History Curriculum: Perspectives on a new national approach**

The ethics application for the above project has been reviewed by the Low Risk Human Research Ethics Review Group (Faculty of Arts and Faculty of the Professions) and is deemed to meet the requirements of the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007)* involving no more than low risk for research participants. You are authorised to commence your research on **02 Jul 2015**.

Ethics approval is granted for three years and is subject to satisfactory annual reporting. The form titled *Annual Report on Project Status* is to be used when reporting annual progress and project completion and can be downloaded at <http://www.adelaide.edu.au/ethics/human/guidelines/reporting>. Prior to expiry, ethics approval may be extended for a further period.

Participants in the study are to be given a copy of the Information Sheet and the signed Consent Form to retain. It is also a condition of approval that you **immediately report** anything which might warrant review of ethical approval including:

- serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants,
- previously unforeseen events which might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project,
- proposed changes to the protocol; and
- the project is discontinued before the expected date of completion.

Please refer to the following ethics approval document for any additional conditions that may apply to this project.

Yours sincerely

PROFESSOR RACHEL A. ANKENY
Co-Convenor
Low Risk Human Research Ethics Review Group
(Faculty of Arts and Faculty of the Professions)

PROFESSOR PAUL BABIE
Co-Convenor
Low Risk Human Research Ethics Review Group
(Faculty of Arts and Faculty of the Professions)

Appendix B: Approvals from State Education Departments and Catholic Education Offices



Government of South Australia
Department for Education and
Child Development

Strategy and Performance

Level 8
31 Flinders Street
Adelaide SA 5000
GPO Box 1152
Adelaide SA 5001
DX 541
Tel: 8224 3825
Fax: 8224 1405

DECD CS/15/00005-1.11

9 November 2015

Ms Claire Bloor
Faculty of Arts, School of Education
University of Adelaide
**10 North Terrace
Adelaide
SA 5000**

Dear Ms Bloor,

Your research project titled *"The Australian History Curriculum: Perspectives on a new national approach"* has now been reviewed by a senior Department for Education and Child Development (DECD) consultant with respect to protection from harm, informed consent, confidentiality and suitability of arrangements. Accordingly, I am pleased to advise you that your project has been **approved**.

Please can you provide us with the names of the sites that you will be conducting your research in as this information is required as part of the original research application process.

Please contact Ms Olga Haeusler, Research Coordinator - Research and Evaluation on (08) 8226 3825 or email: DECD.ResearchUnit@sa.gov.au for any other matters you may wish to discuss regarding the general review/approval process.

Please supply the department with an electronic copy of the final report which will be circulated to interested staff and then made available to DECD educators for future reference.

I wish you well with your research project.

**Abi Alfred
A/MANAGER, RESEARCH AND EVALUATION**

All: Principal/Director/Site Manager letter

Claire Bloor
School of Education
University of Adelaide
10 Pultney Street
ADELAIDE SA 5005

Dear Claire

**RE The Australian History Curriculum: Perspectives on a new national approach:
Amendment approval**

Thank you for your email of 3 December 2015 in which you seek approval for amendments to your research in South Australian Catholic schools.

As per your original approval granted, please be aware that permission of the principal of the school is required. Research in Catholic schools is granted on the basis that individual students, schools and the Catholic sector itself is not specifically identified in published research data and conclusions.

Amendment approval is also contingent upon the following conditions, i.e. that:

- the permission of parents of each child involved in the study and the participating teachers has been obtained
- the research complies with the ethics proposal of the University of Adelaide
- the research complies with any provisions under the Privacy Act that may require adherence by you as researcher in gathering and reporting data
- the presentation in the school is carried out within view of the classroom teacher or authorised school observer
- **no comparison between schooling sectors is made**
- sector requirements relating to child protection and police checks are met by researchers:
 - where researchers obtain information in relation to a student which suggests or indicates abuse, this information must be immediately conveyed to the Director of Catholic Education SA
 - all researchers and assistants, who in the course of the research interact in any way with students, are required to provide evidence of a clearance letter issued by the Catholic Archdiocese of Adelaide Police Check Unit (ph:08 8210 8287) or another form of acceptable police clearance.

Please accept my very best wishes for the research process.

Yours sincerely

MONICA CONWAY
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR
5 December 2015



Department of
Education & Training
Strategy & Review Group

2 Treasury Place
East Melbourne Victoria 3002
Telephone: 03 9637 2000
DX210063

2015_002873

Ms Claire Bloor
10 North Terrace
ADELAIDE SA 5005

Dear Ms Bloor

Thank you for your application of 18 September 2015 in which you request permission to conduct research in Victorian government schools titled *The Australian History Curriculum: perspectives on a new national approach*.

I am pleased to advise that on the basis of the information you have provided your research proposal is approved in principle subject to the conditions detailed below.

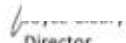
1. The research is conducted in accordance with the final documentation you provided to the Department of Education and Training.
2. Separate approval for the research needs to be sought from school principals. This is to be supported by the Department of Education and Training approved documentation and, if applicable, the letter of approval from a relevant and formally constituted Human Research Ethics Committee.
3. The project is commenced within 12 months of this approval letter and any extensions or variations to your study, including those requested by an ethics committee must be submitted to the Department of Education and Training for its consideration before you proceed.
4. As a matter of courtesy, you advise the relevant Regional Director of the schools or governing body of the early childhood settings that you intend to approach. An outline of your research and a copy of this letter should be provided to the Regional Director or governing body.
5. You acknowledge the support of the Department of Education Training in any publications arising from the research.
6. The Research Agreement conditions, which include the reporting requirements at the conclusion of your study, are upheld. A reminder will be sent for reports not submitted by the study's indicative completion date.

Your details will be dealt with in accordance with the Public Research Act 2012 and the Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014. Should you have any queries or wish to gain access to your personal information held by this department please contact our Privacy Officer at the above address.



I wish you well with your research. Should you have further questions on this matter, please contact Youla Michaels, Project Support Officer, Insights and Evidence Branch, by telephone on (03) 9637 2707 or by email at michaels.youla.v@edumail.vic.gov.au.

Yours sincerely


Director
Insights and Evidence

17/12/2015

In reply please quote:

GE15/0009

Project #2150 Bloor

8 October 2015

Ms Claire Bloor
10 Pulteney Street
ADELAIDE SA 5005

Dear Ms Bloor

I am writing with regard to your research application received on 05/10/2015 concerning your forthcoming project titled, *The Australian History Curriculum: Perspectives on a new national approach*. You have asked approval to approach a Catholic school in the Archdiocese of Melbourne, as you wish to involve teachers, students and parents.

I am pleased to advise that your research proposal is approved in principle subject to the eight standard conditions outlined below.

1. The decision as to whether or not research can proceed in a school rests with the school's principal, so you will need to obtain approval directly from the principal of the school that you wish to involve. You should provide the principal with an outline of your research proposal and indicate what will be asked of the school. A copy of this letter of approval, and a copy of notification of approval from the organisation's/university's Ethics Committee, should also be provided.
2. A copy of the approval notification from your institution's Ethics Committee must be forwarded to this Office, together with any modifications to your research protocol requested by the Committee. You may not start any research in Catholic Schools until this step has been completed.
3. A *Working with Children* (WWC) check – or registration with the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) – is necessary for all researchers visiting schools. Appropriate documentation must be shown to the principal before starting the research in the school.
4. No student is to participate in the research study unless s/he is willing to do so and informed consent is given in writing by a parent/guardian.
5. Any substantial modifications to the research proposal, or additional research involving use of the data collected, will require a further research approval submission to this Office.
6. Data relating to individuals or the school are to remain confidential.

1 of 2

7. Since participating schools have an interest in research findings, you should consider ways in which the results of the study could be made available for the benefit of the school community.
8. At the conclusion of the study, a copy or summary of the research findings should be forwarded to Catholic Education Melbourne. It would be appreciated if you could submit your report in an **electronic format** using the email address provided below.

I wish you well with your research study. If you have any queries concerning this matter, please contact Ms Shani Prendergast at apr@ceomelb.catholic.edu.au.

Yours sincerely

Mr Jim Miles
DIRECTOR ENTERPRISE SERVICES



Ms Claire Bloor
10 North Terrace
ADELAIDE SA 5005

Dear Ms Bloor

Thank you for your application received 2 October 2015 to conduct research on Department of Education sites.

The focus and outcomes of your research project, *The Australian History Curriculum: perspectives on a new national approach*, are of interest to the Department. I give permission for you to approach principals to invite their participation in the project as outlined in your application. It is a condition of approval, however, that upon conclusion the results of this study are forwarded to the Department at the email address below.

Consistent with Department policy, participation in your research project will be the decision of the schools invited to participate, individual staff members, the children in those schools and their parents. A copy of this letter must be provided to principals when requesting their participation in the research. Researchers are required to sign a confidential declaration and provide a current Working with Children Check upon arrival at Department of Education schools.

Responsibility for quality control of ethics and methodology of the proposed research resides with the institution supervising the research. The Department notes a copy of a letter confirming that you have received ethical approval of your research protocol from the University of Adelaide Human Research Ethics Committee.

Any proposed changes to the research project will need to be submitted for Department approval prior to implementation.

Please contact Dr Adriaan Wolvaardt, Coordinator Research Applications, on 08 9264 5512 or researchandpolicy@education.wa.edu.au if you have further enquiries.

Very best wishes for the successful completion of your project.

Yours sincerely

ALAN DODSON
DIRECTOR
EVALUATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

8 December 2015



CATHOLIC EDUCATION
OFFICE OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CATHOLIC EDUCATION

2 November 2015

Miss Claire Bloor
c/- Dr Margaret Secombe
School of Education
10 North Terrace
The University of Adelaide
ADELAIDE SA 5006

Dear Miss Bloor

**RE: THE AUSTRALIAN HISTORY CURRICULUM: PERSPECTIVES ON A
NEW NATIONAL APPROACH**

Thank you for your completed application received 8 October 2015, whereby this research aims to discover whether student, teacher and parent opinions of the history curriculum taught in schools under the Australian Curriculum are comparable to those presented in the media and academic publications.

I give in principle support for the selected Catholic schools in Western Australia to participate in this valuable study. However, consistent with Catholic Education Western Australia (CEWA) policy, participation in your research project will be the decision of the individual principal and staff members. A copy of this letter must be provided to principals when requesting their participation in the research.

The condition of CEWA approval is that a final copy of the survey questions are to be provided to CEWA, if they differ from the current draft provided.

Responsibility for quality control of ethics and methodology of the proposed research resides with the institution supervising the research. CEWA notes that The University of Adelaide Human Research Ethics Committee has granted permission for this research project until 31 July 2018 (Reference Number: H-2015-142).

Any changes to the proposed methodology will need to be submitted for CEWA approval prior to implementation. The focus and outcomes of your research project are of interest to CEWA. It is therefore a condition of approval that the research findings of this study are forwarded to CEWA.

Further enquiries may be directed to Jane Gostelow at gostelow.jane@ceo.wa.edu.au or (08) 6380 5118.

I wish you all the best with your research.

Yours sincerely

Dr Tim McDonald



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CATHOLIC EDUCATION
50 Ruspitt Street, Leederville WA 6007 | PO Box 198, Leederville WA 6003
T (08) 6380 5220
E mcdonald.tim@ceo.wa.edu.au | W ceo.wa.edu.au

Appendix C: Triangulation Data

TABLE 1: TRIANGULATION DATA I

ALPHABETICAL LIST BY AUTHOR OF MEDIA ARTICLES PUBLISHED

ONLINE 2014 – 2018 (N=57)*

AUTH OR	DATE	SOURCE	TITLE	USED IN
1. Adoniou, Louden & Savage	2015 Sept 23	<i>The Conversations on</i>	What will changes to the national curriculum mean for schools?	Chapter s 8
2. Adoniou, Louden, Zyngier & Riddle	2014 Oct 12	<i>The Conversations on</i>	National Curriculum Review: Experts Respond	8
3. Ashenden	2014 Oct 14	<i>Inside Story</i>	Détente? Donnelly, Wiltshire & the national curriculum	6
4. Ashton	2014 Jan 3	<i>The Conversations on</i>	Stop tinkering with school history and start teaching it	5
5. Balogh & Kelly	2017 Aug 24	<i>The Australian</i>	Ideologues ‘have captured’ school history curriculum	5, 6
6. Barrett	2014 Dec	<i>ABC News</i>	National curriculum changes referred to national authority	6

	12			
7. Bennet	2014 Jan 10	<i>News.com.au</i>	Curriculum review political, critic says	6
8. Bickers	2015 May 5	<i>PerthNow</i>	Aboriginal history: WA schools need to improve colonial approach to teaching	7
9. Boston	2014 Jan 17	<i>The Sydney Morning Herald</i>	Christopher Pyne's review is just a diversion from Gonski reforms	8
10. Brennan	2014 Nov 14	<i>The Conversation</i>	Will the curriculum review make it into schools? It's a political waiting game	8
11. Cairns	2018 June 6	<i>The Conversation</i>	'Western civilisation'? History teaching has moved on, and so should those who champion it	7
12. Chilcott	2014 Jan 11	<i>The Courier-Mail</i>	Teachers wade in after Federal Minister Christopher Pyne announces national curriculum review of school subject matter	6
13. Crowe	2014 Jan 10	<i>The Australian</i>	Pyne tackles bias in the classrooms with national curriculum review	5, 6
14. Cullen	2014 Jan 10	<i>ABC News</i>	Teachers warn of 'culture wars' as Christopher Pyne announces back-to-basics curriculum review	6
15. Daley	2014 March 19	<i>The Guardian</i>	Is the national curriculum biased? Let's have a classroom debate	5, 6
16.	2015	<i>The</i>	NSW goes slow on primary curriculum	

Davies	Sept 20	<i>Sydney Morning Herald</i>	as Commonwealth chalks up changes	
17. Donnelly	2017 June 29	<i>The Daily Telegraph</i>	Undermined from within	5, 6
18. Donnelly	2018 Jan 4	<i>The Australian</i>	The battle of ideas is being lost in our classrooms	6
19. Foley & Muldoon	2014 Aug 15	<i>The Conversati on</i>	Pyning for Indigenous rights in the Australian Curriculum	7
20. Fox Koob	2017 Oct 18	<i>The Australian</i>	Howard warns identity politics to leave history students in the dark	5
21. Gailberg er	2015 Dec 28	<i>The Advertiser</i>	Proclamation Day 2015: Governor Hieu Van Le calls for more history teaching in SA schools	7
22. Halbert	2015 Sept 23	<i>The Conversati on</i>	Pyne leaves education having failed to sell a vision for the past	5, 8
23. Harrison	2018 Jan 24	<i>ABC News</i>	Victorian election: teachers, principals criticise Coalition's school curriculum changes	6
24. Hassan	2014 Jan 28	<i>The Conversati on</i>	Curriculum review: Western civilisation's legacy has a dark side	5
25. Hiatt	2015	<i>The West</i>	Modern Aussie history shelved	

	July 21	<i>Australian</i>		
26. Hurst	2014 Jan 10	<i>The Guardian</i>	Christopher Pyne: Curriculum must focus on Anzac Day and western history	5, 7, 8
27. Ireland	2014 Jan 10	<i>The Sydney Morning Herald</i>	Christopher Pyne appoints critics of school curriculum to review the system	6
28. Knott	2014 March 11	<i>The Sydney Morning Herald</i>	National curriculum overcrowded and too advanced, say principals	5
29. Knott	2014 July15	<i>The Sydney Morning Herald</i>	Head of curriculum review, Kevin Donnelly, says corporal punishment in schools 'was very effective'	
30. Knott	2014 Oct 22	<i>The Sydney Morning Herald</i>	Questions over curriculum experts' links to Coalition	6
31. Koelma	2014 May19	<i>News.com. au</i>	Why the Australian history curriculum has gaping holes in its coverage of world history	7
32. Koelma	2014 May 19	<i>News.com. au</i>	What is included in the Australian History Curriculum and what is left out?	7
33.	2017	<i>The Daily</i>	Education fads are failing our children	

Latham	Sept 4	<i>Telegraph</i>		
34. Lang	2015 Mar 2	<i>The Conversations on</i>	There is no dastardly EU plot to hijack the history curriculum	
35. Louden	2014 July 24	<i>The Conversations on</i>	The Australian Curriculum review: what the submissions say	6
36..Mac Cormack	2015 May 9	<i>News Weekly</i>	Taking Australian history out of the curriculum	7
37.MacC ullum	2014 Jan 20	<i>The Drum</i>	History repeats in curriculum war	7
38. Maude	2014 Dec 10	<i>The Conversations on</i>	Paring back the curriculum would be a difficult and unnecessary task	8
39. Mosley	2014 Oct 13	<i>ABC News</i>	We can't change national curriculum every time we change Government: ACT Education Minister	
40. Noringto n	2017 Aug 25	<i>The Australian</i>	Don't rip up our proud history, says John Howard	7
41. Remeikis	2017 Aug 29	<i>The Sydney Morning Herald</i>	'An additional plaque': Bill Shorten's plans to neutralize Captain Cook debate	7
42. Riordan & McIlroy	2014 Oct 13	<i>The Canberra Times</i>	ACT Education Minister: simplified national curriculum 'too fast'	6

43. Roberts	2014 Mar 12	<i>The Conversations on</i>	Is education really all about the content?	5
44. Sears	2017 Dec 5	<i>The Conversations on</i>	Why history education is central to the survival of democracy	5
45. Sendzuik & Crotty	2017 Oct 20	<i>The Conversations on</i>	'Identity politics' has not taken over university history courses	
46. Smith, Lim & Gailberger	2015 Dec 28	<i>The Advertiser</i>	Proclamation Day almost forgotten and many south Australians don't know why we have a public holiday for it	7
47. Sonnermann & Goss	2018 Feb 12	<i>The Conversations on</i>	Why the Commonwealth should resist meddling in schools	8
48. Taylor	2014 Jan 10	<i>The Conversations on</i>	National curriculum the latest target of Coalition's culture war	5, 6
49. Taylor	2014 Aug 22	<i>The Conversations on</i>	Evidence-free beliefs: History in the hands of the Coalition	5
50. Taylor	2014 Sept 11	<i>The Conversations on</i>	Australia is only one front in the history curriculum wars	6
51.	2014	<i>The</i>	Pyne Curriculum review prefers	5

Taylor	Oct 20	<i>Conversations</i>	analysis-free myth to history	
52. Topsfield & Knott	2014 Oct 13	<i>The Sydney Morning Herald</i>	Education review: Overhaul of ‘bloated’ national curriculum widely supported	5
53. Tudball	2014 Oct 15	<i>The Conversations</i>	Curriculum review filled with contradictions	8
54. Willingham	2018 Jan 24	<i>ABC News</i>	Victorian election: Focus on national pride, ‘back-to-basics’ curriculum under Coalition education plan	7
55. Wiltshire	2017 Sept 1	<i>The Australian</i>	School history curriculum teaches us to disparage our heritage	6,7
56. Zarmati	2014 Jan 14	<i>The Conversations</i>	A Lesson for Christopher Pyne	6
57. Zaunmayer	2018 Mar 9	<i>The West Australian</i>	Push for Pilbara local history	7

* Full publication details for the media articles listed above can be found in the bibliography at the end of the thesis. Not all articles listed as related to a chapter were directly quoted or referenced in the chapter.

Chapter	Main Theme of Chapter	N
Five	Purpose, Content and Skills in the AC:H	15
Six	Process of Development & Consultation for AC:H	19
Seven	Inclusion of Australian History in AC:H	15

Eight	Involvement of C'th Gov in History Education	9
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TABLE 2: TRIANGULATION DATA II
 ALPHABETICAL LIST BY AUTHOR OF PEER-REVIEWED ARTICLES
 PUBLISHED IN ACADEMIC JOURNALS
 2014 – 2018 (N=21)*

AUTHOR	DATE	SOURCE	TITLE	USED IN
1. Burridge, Buchanan & Chodkiewicz	2014	Australian Journal of Teacher Education	Human rights & history education	Chapters 5
2. Capano	2015	Journal of Comparative Policy Analysis: Research & Practice	Federal dynamics of changing governance arrangements in education: A comparative perspective on Australia, Canada & Germany	8
3. Donnelly	2015	Curriculum Perspectives	A view from a member of the review team	6
4. Forrest	2014	Institute of Public Affairs Review	Scrap the national curriculum	8
5. Kindler	2015	Curriculum Perspectives	Review of the Australia Curriculum: A view from a school leader	6
6. Gannicott	2014	Policy	After the national review: What comes next in education policy?	7, 8
7. Hart	2015	Curriculum	The preferable and	6

		Perspectives	probable futures of Australian Curriculum: History (Years 7-10): What insight does the review of the Australian Curriculum offer?	
8. Henderson	2015	Curriculum Perspectives	Introduction to point & counterpoint: What does the Review of the Australian Curriculum mean for history?	5
9. Joel	2017	Australian Policy and History	Australia's new national curriculum and the future of history	7
10. Lingard & McGregor	2014	The Curriculum Journal	Two contrasting Australian responses to globalization: What students should learn or become	5
11. Maadad & Rodwell	2016	International Education Journal	Whose history and who is denied? Politics and the history curriculum in Lebanon & Australia	7
13. Martin	2016	Agora	Debating history in the Australian Curriculum: A clash of paradigms?	5
14. McDonald	2014	Education Policy	Think tanks and the media: How the	8

			conservative movement gained entry into the education policy arena	
15. Parkes	2015	Curriculum Perspectives	What paradigms inform the Review of the Australian Curriculum? What does this mean for the possibilities of critical and effective histories in Australian education?	7
16. Peterson	2016	Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education	Different backgrounds, similar concerns? The 'history wars' and the teaching of history in Australia and England	5, 6, 7
17. Reid	2015	Curriculum Perspectives	Review of the Australian Curriculum	6
18. Rodwell	2016	Education Research & Perspectives	Re-examining the curriculum development centre: Coordinative federalism & Kingdon's agenda-setting	8
19 Rodwell	2017	Issues in Educational research	A national history curriculum, racism, a moral panic and risk society theory	6
20. Sharp	2015	Agora	Habermas's three forms	5, 7

			of knowledge, active citizenship, and the Australian (history) Curriculum	
21. Zarmati	2015	Conservation and Management of Archaeological sites	Using archaeology to teach Australia's 'difficult' indigenous past	7

* Full publication details for the journal articles listed above can be found in the bibliography at the end of the thesis. Not all articles listed as related to a chapter were directly quoted or referenced in the chapter.

Chapter	Main Theme of Chapter	N
Five	Purpose, Content and Skills in the AC:H	6
Six	Process of Development & Consultation for AC:H	6
Seven	Inclusion of Australian History in AC:H	7
Eight	Involvement of C'th Gov in History Education	5

Appendix D: Semi-Structured Interview and Focus Group

Questions

Focus groups: Students (Approximately 30 minutes)

What do you like about History lessons? What aspects don't you like?

What sort of History do you think school students should be taught? (Australian, European, Indigenous, Asian, World etc.)

What is your opinion about the amount you learn about Australian history at school?

To what extent is the history you learn about in school relevant to you and your life?

Do you feel that the history you are taught in school includes you and your family? (Family background/diversity)

What is your opinion on History being a compulsory subject?

Who do you think should decide what topics you learn in History?

How far do you believe the federal government should be involved in deciding what is taught in History?

To what extent do you feel students should have a say in deciding what you learn about in History?

Is there anything you would change about the history you learn in school?

Do you think you will choose to study History in year 11 or 12?

Individual interview: Parents (Approximately 20 minutes)

Did you study History in school? If yes, up to what level?

How aware are you of what your child learns in History?

How important do you believe it is for students to study history in school and why?

What sort of history do you think school students should be taught? (Australian, European, Indigenous, World etc.). Are there any topics that you feel aren't appropriate?

To what extent do you feel the history your child is taught in school reflects your family's values and includes your family background? (E.g. Ancestors who migrated from overseas)

Who do you believe should determine what is taught in History lessons?

How important is it for parents like yourself to submit comments on things such as the recent review of the Australian Curriculum? Why or why not?

Were you aware you were able to submit your views on the Australian Curriculum to the review?

To what extent do you feel the views of parents were taken into account when the curriculum was developed and reviewed?

What role do you think the federal government should have in determining what is taught in History?

What is your opinion on History becoming a compulsory subject for school students?

Individual interview: Teachers (Approximately 20 minutes)

How long have you been teaching History?

How much history did you study as part of your university degree?

Do you think Australian history is covered in enough depth in the Australian Curriculum?

How important do you think a world history approach is?

Which History topics have you had the most success teaching? Were there any that you found difficult?

Do you think the current History curriculum takes into account the backgrounds of your students? Is it easily adaptable?

Do you think that History should be a compulsory subject for school students?

Who do you think should determine what is included in the History curriculum?

What role do you think the federal government should have in determining the History curriculum?

Do you believe that the History curriculum favours one political ideology?

What are your views on the findings of the review of the Australian Curriculum in terms of History?

-The Australian Curriculum: History should be revised in order to properly recognise the impact and significance of Western civilisation and Australia's Judeo-Christian heritage, values and beliefs.

-Attention should also be given to developing an overall conceptual narrative that underpins what otherwise are disconnected, episodic historical developments, movements, epochs and events.

- A revision of the choice available throughout this curriculum should be conducted to ensure that students are covering all the key periods of Australian history, especially that of the 19th century.

- The curriculum needs to better acknowledge the strengths and weaknesses and the positives and negatives of both Western and Indigenous cultures and histories. Especially during the primary years of schooling, the emphasis should be on imparting historical knowledge and understanding central to the discipline instead of expecting children to be historiographers.

(Review of the Australian Curriculum, 2014, 181)

How far do you feel the views of teachers were taken into account when the curriculum was developed and reviewed?

History teaching in schools seems to generate a lot of comments in the media, why do you think this is?

**Individual Interview: History Teachers' Association Member
(Approximately 20 minutes)**

Were you/your association involved in the development of the History curriculum? In what ways?

How do you feel about the development process? E.g. was it thorough?

What is your opinion on the *Australian Curriculum: History*?

Does it cater for diversity?

What would you change about the curriculum?

What aspects of the curriculum do you think are well done?

Did your association have much involvement with the review of the curriculum?

Were you satisfied with this?

To what extent do you think that party politics shaped the curriculum?

How important is it to have a national History curriculum?

History teaching in schools seems to generate a lot of comments in the media, why do you think this is?

Appendix E: Example Information Sheets and Consent Forms

Information and Consent Forms for HTA Participants



PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

History Teachers Association Member

PROJECT TITLE: The Australian History Curriculum: Perspectives on a new national approach

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Dr Margaret Secombe

STUDENT RESEARCHER: Claire Bloor

STUDENT'S DEGREE: PhD in Education

Dear Participant,

You are invited to participate in the research project described below.

What is the project about?

You are invited to participate in a study to explore the way the Australian Curriculum: History is perceived by key stakeholders. This project is examining the perspectives of students, teachers and parents on the history curriculum that has been implemented in schools under the Australian Curriculum. The project aims to look at how the new history curriculum is able to influence the values and content taught in classrooms and whether or not it is able in its current form to cater for the diversity amongst students and views within Australian society. It also aims to examine how various educational stakeholders have shaped the formation of the new Australian history curriculum (e.g. Content and structure) and to examine the issue of the politicisation of the history curriculum within Australian schools. The objectives of the project are to establish the various opinions held by different stakeholder groups on the nature and extent of politicisation of the Australian history curriculum, identify differences and commonalities among the views of various stakeholder groups regarding the direction the history curriculum should take, and to establish how ideological factors related to political, and cultural groups have shaped the curriculum.

Who is undertaking the project?

This study is being conducted in partial fulfilment of a PhD in Education for Claire Bloor, under the supervision of Dr Margaret Secombe and Dr Grant Rodwell.

Why am I being invited to participate?

You have been invited to participate in this study because you are a member of a History Teachers Association and have been involved in the consultation process for the Australian Curriculum: History. There will be no impact on your relationship with the History Teachers Association should you choose not to participate.

What will I be asked to do?

If you consent to participate, you will be asked to contribute data through participating in a 20 minute discussion about your views on the history curriculum to be held at a location convenient for you (e.g. in or outside school). With your permission, this discussion will be audio-recorded.

How much time will the project take?

Your individual interview is anticipated to take around 20 minutes of your time. It is proposed that this interview will occur at a time convenient to you.

Are there any risks associated with participating in this project?

Although it is not anticipated that you will suffer any adverse effects from participating in this study, there is a chance that you may feel anxious during the interview. During the interview, if you feel uncomfortable, you are able to decline to answer any or all questions or to request that the interview cease without any explanation or consequence. You are able to ask that data that you have contributed be withdrawn from the study at any point during the project.

What are the benefits of the research project?

The study will provide you with an opportunity to reflect upon the history curriculum being used in your classroom. The history education community may benefit from the findings of this study in terms of better understanding key educational stakeholders' (parents, teachers and students) perspectives on the direction of the Australian Curriculum: History.

Can I withdraw from the project?

Participation in this project is completely voluntary. If you agree to participate, you can withdraw from the study at any time.

What will happen to my information?

Audio files will be password protected and stored on a secure server at the University of Adelaide. Your name and other identifying information will be removed from the data and replaced with a code. After a period of five years from the publication of the thesis, all field notes will be shredded, and computer files such as raw audio recordings will be deleted. All information collected by the researchers will be treated confidentially.

Who do I contact if I have questions about the project?

If you have any questions about this project, please feel free to contact one of the researchers:

Dr Margaret Secombe

Telephone: [REDACTED]

Ms Claire Bloor

Telephone: [REDACTED]

What if I have a complaint or any concerns?

The study has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee at the University of Adelaide (approval number H-2015-142). If you have questions or problems associated with the practical aspects of your participation in the project, or wish to raise a concern or complaint about the project, then you should consult the Principal Investigator. Contact the Human Research Ethics Committee's Secretariat on phone (08) 8313 6028 or by email to hrec@adelaide.edu.au. If you wish to speak with an independent person regarding concerns or a complaint, the University's policy on research involving human participants, or your rights as a participant. Any complaint or concern will be treated in confidence and fully investigated. You will be informed of the outcome.

If I want to participate, what do I do?

If you would like to participate in this project, please return the completed and signed consent form that is attached to this information sheet to the researcher.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Margaret Secombe

Ms Claire Bloor

CONSENT FORM

1. I have read the attached Information Sheet and agree to take part in the following research project:

Title:	<i>The Australian History Curriculum: Perspectives on a new national approach</i>
Ethics Approval Number:	H-2015-142

2. I have had the project, so far as it affects me, fully explained to my satisfaction by the research worker. My consent is given freely.

3. I have been given the opportunity to have a member of my family or a friend present while the project was explained to me.

4. Although I understand the purpose of the research project it has also been explained that involvement may not be of any benefit to me.

5. I have been informed that, while information gained during the study may be published, I will not be identified and my personal results will not be divulged.

6. I understand that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time.

7. I agree to the interview being audio recorded. Yes No

8. I am aware that I should keep a copy of this Consent Form, when completed, and the attached Information Sheet.

Participant to complete:

Name: _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____

Researcher/Witness to complete:

I have described the nature of the research to _____
(print name of participant)

and in my opinion she/he understood the explanation.

Signature: _____ Position: _____ Date: _____

2013_consent_form_for_participation_non_medicalhealth_research_only.docx

The University of Adelaide
Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC)

This document is for people who are participants in a research project.

CONTACTS FOR INFORMATION ON PROJECT AND INDEPENDENT COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

The following study has been reviewed and approved by the University of Adelaide Human Research Ethics Committee:

Project Title:	The Australian History Curriculum: Perspectives on a new national approach
Approval Number:	H-2015-142

The Human Research Ethics Committee monitors all the research projects which it has approved. The committee considers it important that people participating in approved projects have an independent and confidential reporting mechanism which they can use if they have any worries or complaints about that research.

This research project will be conducted according to the NHMRC National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (see <http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/publications/synopses/e72syn.htm>)

1. If you have questions or problems associated with the practical aspects of your participation in the project, or wish to raise a concern or complaint about the project, then you should consult the project co-ordinator:

Name:	Dr Margaret Secombe
Phone:	M: [REDACTED]
Name:	Ms Claire Bloor
Phone:	M: [REDACTED]

2. If you wish to discuss with an independent person matters related to:
 - making a complaint, or

secretariat@ethics.human.adelaide.edu.au

- raising concerns on the conduct of the project, or
- the University policy on research involving human participants, or
- your rights as a participant,

contact the Human Research Ethics Committee's Secretariat on phone (08) 8313 6028 or by email to hrec@adelaide.edu.au

Information and Consent Forms for Teacher Participants



PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET **Teachers**

PROJECT TITLE: The Australian History Curriculum: Perspectives on a new national approach

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Dr Margaret Secombe

STUDENT RESEARCHER: Claire Bloor

STUDENT'S DEGREE: PhD in Education

Dear Teacher,

You are invited to participate in the research project described below.

What is the project about?

You are invited to participate in a study to explore the way the Australian Curriculum: History is perceived by key stakeholders. This project is examining the perspectives of students, teachers and parents on the history curriculum that has been implemented in schools under the Australian Curriculum. The project aims to look at how the new history curriculum is able to influence the values and content taught in classrooms and whether or not it is able in its current form to cater for the diversity amongst students and views within Australian society. It also aims to examine how various educational stakeholders have shaped the formation of the new Australian history curriculum (e.g. Content and structure) and to examine the issue of the politicisation of the history curriculum within Australian schools. The objectives of the project are to establish the various opinions held by different stakeholder groups on the nature and extent of politicisation of the Australian history curriculum, identify differences and commonalities among the views of various stakeholder groups regarding the direction the history curriculum should take, and to establish how ideological factors related to political, and cultural groups have shaped the curriculum.

Who is undertaking the project?

This study is being conducted in partial fulfilment of a PhD in Education for Claire Bloor, under the supervision of Dr Margaret Secombe and Dr Grant Rodwell.

Why am I being invited to participate?

You have been invited to participate in this study because you are currently teaching history using the Australian Curriculum and have the experience to be able to discuss its application in the classroom. There will be no impact on your relationship with the school should you choose not to participate.

What will I be asked to do?

If you consent to participate, you will be asked to contribute data through participating in a 20 minute discussion about your views on the history curriculum to be held at your school. With your permission, this discussion will be audio-recorded. You will also be asked to distribute consent forms for students and a parent to participate in a 20 minute focus group discussion and individual interview respectively.

How much time will the project take?

Your individual interview is anticipated to take around 20 minutes of your time. It is proposed that this interview will occur during school time.

Are there any risks associated with participating in this project?

Although it is not anticipated that you will suffer any adverse effects from participating in this study, there is a chance that you may feel anxious during the interview. During the interview, if you feel uncomfortable, you are able to decline to answer any or all questions or to request that the interview cease without any explanation or

consequence. You are able to ask that data that you have contributed be withdrawn from the study at any point during the project.

What are the benefits of the research project?

The study will provide you with an opportunity to reflect upon the history curriculum being used in your classroom. The history education community may benefit from the findings of this study in terms of better understanding key educational stakeholders' (parents, teachers and students) perspectives on the direction of the Australian Curriculum: History.

Can I withdraw from the project?

Participation in this project is completely voluntary. If you agree to participate, you can withdraw from the study at any time.

What will happen to my information?

Audio files will be password protected and stored on a secure server at the University of Adelaide. Your name and other identifying information will be removed from the data and replaced with a code. After a period of five years from the publication of the thesis, all field notes will be shredded, and computer files such as raw audio recordings will be deleted. All information collected by the researchers will be treated confidentially.

Who do I contact if I have questions about the project?

If you have any questions about this project, please feel free to contact one of the researchers:

Dr Margaret Secombe

Telephone: [REDACTED]

Ms Claire Bloor

Telephone: [REDACTED]

email: [REDACTED]

What if I have a complaint or any concerns?

The study has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee at the University of Adelaide (approval number H-2015-142). If you have questions or problems associated with the practical aspects of your participation in the project, or wish to raise a concern or complaint about the project, then you should consult the Principal Investigator. Contact the Human Research Ethics Committee's Secretariat on phone (08) 8313 6028 or by email to hrec@adelaide.edu.au. If you wish to speak with an independent person regarding concerns or a complaint, the University's policy on research involving human participants, or your rights as a participant. Any complaint or concern will be treated in confidence and fully investigated. You will be informed of the outcome.

If I want to participate, what do I do?

If you would like to participate in this project, please return the completed and signed consent form that is attached to this information sheet to the researcher.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Margaret Secombe

Ms Claire Bloor

The University of Adelaide
Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC)

This document is for people who are participants in a research project.

**CONTACTS FOR INFORMATION ON PROJECT AND INDEPENDENT COMPLAINTS
PROCEDURE**

The following study has been reviewed and approved by the University of Adelaide Human Research Ethics Committee:

Project Title:	The Australian History Curriculum: Perspectives on a new national approach
Approval Number:	H-2015-142

The Human Research Ethics Committee monitors all the research projects which it has approved. The committee considers it important that people participating in approved projects have an independent and confidential reporting mechanism which they can use if they have any worries or complaints about that research.

This research project will be conducted according to the NHMRC National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (see <http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/publications/synopses/e72syn.htm>)

1. If you have questions or problems associated with the practical aspects of your participation in the project, or wish to raise a concern or complaint about the project, then you should consult the project co-ordinator:

Name:	Dr Margaret Secombe
Phone:	M: [REDACTED]
Name:	Ms Claire Bloor
Phone:	M: [REDACTED]

2. If you wish to discuss with an independent person matters related to:
 - making a complaint, or
 - raising concerns on the conduct of the project, or
 - the University policy on research involving human participants, or

secretariat/ethics/human/complaints

CONSENT FORM

1. I have read the attached Information Sheet and agree to take part in the following research project:

Title:	<i>The Australian History Curriculum: Perspectives on a new national approach</i>
Ethics Approval Number:	H-2015-142

2. I have had the project, so far as it affects me, fully explained to my satisfaction by the research worker. My consent is given freely.
3. I have been given the opportunity to have a member of my family or a friend present while the project was explained to me.
4. Although I understand the purpose of the research project it has also been explained that involvement may not be of any benefit to me.
5. I have been informed that, while information gained during the study may be published, I will not be identified and my personal results will not be divulged.
6. I understand that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time.
7. I agree to the interview being audio recorded. Yes No
8. I am aware that I should keep a copy of this Consent Form, when completed, and the attached Information Sheet.

Participant to complete:

Name: _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____

Researcher/Witness to complete:

I have described the nature of the research to _____
(print name of participant)

and in my opinion she/he understood the explanation.

Signature: _____ Position: _____ Date: _____

Information and Consent Forms for Parent Participants



PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET Parents

PROJECT TITLE: The Australian History Curriculum: Perspectives on a new national approach

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Dr Margaret Secombe

STUDENT RESEARCHER: Claire Bloor

STUDENT'S DEGREE: PhD in Education

Dear Parent,

You are invited to participate in the research project described below.

What is the project about?

You are invited to participate in a study to explore the way the Australian Curriculum: History is perceived by key stakeholders. This project is examining the perspectives of students, teachers and parents on the history curriculum that has been implemented in schools under the Australian Curriculum. The project aims to look at how the new history curriculum is able to influence the values and content taught in classrooms and whether or not it is able in its current form to cater for the diversity amongst students and views within Australian society. It also aims to examine how various educational stakeholders have shaped the formation of the new Australian history curriculum (e.g. Content and structure) and to examine the issue of the politicisation of the history curriculum within Australian schools. The objectives of the project are to establish the various opinions held by different stakeholder groups on the nature and extent of politicisation of the Australian history curriculum, identify differences and commonalities among the views of various stakeholder groups regarding the direction the history curriculum should take, and to establish how ideological factors related to political, and cultural groups have shaped the curriculum.

Who is undertaking the project?

This study is being conducted in partial fulfilment of a PhD in Education for Claire Bloor, under the supervision of Dr Margaret Secombe and Dr Grant Rodwell.

Why am I being invited to participate?

You have been invited to participate in this study because you have a child currently studying history at school. There will be no impact on you or your child's relationship with the school should you choose not to participate.

What will I be asked to do?

If you consent to participate, you will be asked to contribute data through participating in a 20 minute discussion about your views on the history curriculum to be held at your child's school. With your permission, this discussion will be audio-recorded.

How much time will the project take?

It is anticipated that your individual interview will take up 20 minutes of your time. It is proposed that this interview will occur during school time.

Are there any risks associated with participating in this project?

Although it is not anticipated that you will suffer any adverse effects from participating in this study, there is a chance that you may feel anxious during the interview. During the interview, if you feel uncomfortable, you are able to decline to answer any or all questions or to request that the interview cease without any explanation or consequence. You are able to ask that data that you have contributed be withdrawn from the study at any point during the project.

What are the benefits of the research project?

While there may be no direct benefit to you in participating in this project, it is hoped that data collected by this project will form an indication of how well the history curriculum implemented under the Australian Curriculum is being received by key educational stakeholders and may help in future policy planning.

Can I withdraw from the project?

Participation in this project is completely voluntary. If you agree to participate, you can withdraw from the study at any time.

What will happen to my information?

Audio files will be password protected and stored on a secure server at the University of Adelaide. Your name and other identifying information will be removed from the data and replaced with a code. After a period of five years from the publication of the thesis, all field notes will be shredded, and computer files such as raw audio recordings will be deleted. All information collected by the researchers will be treated confidentially.

Who do I contact if I have questions about the project?

If you have any questions about this project, please feel free to contact one of the researchers:

Dr Margaret Secombe

Telephone: [REDACTED]

Ms Claire Bloor

Telephone: [REDACTED]

What if I have a complaint or any concerns?

The study has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee at the University of Adelaide (approval number H-2015-142). If you have questions or problems associated with the practical aspects of your participation in the project, or wish to raise a concern or complaint about the project, then you should consult the Principal Investigator. Contact the Human Research Ethics Committee's Secretariat on phone (08) 8313 6028 or by email to hrec@adelaide.edu.au if you wish to speak with an independent person regarding concerns or a complaint, the University's policy on research involving human participants, or your rights as a participant. Any complaint or concern will be treated in confidence and fully investigated. You will be informed of the outcome.

If I want to participate, what do I do?

If you would like to participate in this project please return the attached consent form to your child's school, and advise the researcher via email when you would be available. In the case that more than one parent volunteers to participate, a parent will be randomly selected from the volunteers to participate.

Yours sincerely,

Ms Claire Bloor

Dr Margaret Secombe

The University of Adelaide
Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC)

This document is for people who are participants in a research project.

**CONTACTS FOR INFORMATION ON PROJECT AND INDEPENDENT COMPLAINTS
PROCEDURE**

The following study has been reviewed and approved by the University of Adelaide Human Research Ethics Committee:

Project Title:	The Australian History Curriculum: Perspectives on a new national approach
Approval Number:	H-2015-142

The Human Research Ethics Committee monitors all the research projects which it has approved. The committee considers it important that people participating in approved projects have an independent and confidential reporting mechanism which they can use if they have any worries or complaints about that research.

This research project will be conducted according to the NHMRC National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (see <http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/publications/synopses/e72syn.htm>)

1. If you have questions or problems associated with the practical aspects of your participation in the project, or wish to raise a concern or complaint about the project, then you should consult the project co-ordinator:

Name:	Dr Margaret Secombe
Phone:	M. [REDACTED]
Name:	Ms Claire Bloor
Phone:	M. [REDACTED]

2. If you wish to discuss with an independent person matters related to:
 - making a complaint, or
 - raising concerns on the conduct of the project, or
 - the University policy on research involving human participants, or

- your rights as a participant,

contact the Human Research Ethics Committee's Secretariat on phone (08) 8313 6028 or by email to hrec@adelaide.edu.au

CONSENT FORM

1. I have read the attached Information Sheet and agree to take part in the following research project:

Title:	<i>The Australian History Curriculum: Perspectives on a new national approach</i>
Ethics Approval Number:	H-2015-142

2. I have had the project, so far as it affects me, fully explained to my satisfaction by the research worker. My consent is given freely.

3. I have been given the opportunity to have a member of my family or a friend present while the project was explained to me.

4. Although I understand the purpose of the research project it has also been explained that involvement may not be of any benefit to me.

5. I have been informed that, while information gained during the study may be published, I will not be identified and my personal results will not be divulged.

6. I understand that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time.

7. I agree to the interview being audio recorded. Yes No

8. I am aware that I should keep a copy of this Consent Form, when completed, and the attached Information Sheet.

Participant to complete:

Name: _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____

Researcher/Witness to complete:

I have described the nature of the research to _____
(print name of participant)

and in my opinion she/he understood the explanation.

Signature: _____ Position: _____ Date: _____

Information and Consent Forms for Student Participants



PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET Students

PROJECT TITLE: The Australian History Curriculum: Perspectives on a new national approach

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Dr Margaret Secombe

STUDENT RESEARCHER: Claire Bloor

STUDENT'S DEGREE: PhD in Education

Dear Student,

You are invited to participate in the research project described below.

What is the project about?

This project is looking at the opinions of students, teachers and parents on the history curriculum that has been introduced in schools under the Australian Curriculum. The project aims to look at whether the history students are being taught takes into account the diversity amongst students and the different views Australian students and their families and teachers hold about history. The objectives of the project are to gather the opinions of students, teachers, and parents on the Australian history curriculum, and look at the direction they believe history in schools should take, and to find out how far the beliefs of various political and cultural groups have shaped what is taught in history classes.

Who is undertaking the project?

This project is being conducted by Claire Bloor. This research will form the basis for the degree of PhD in Education at the University of Adelaide under the supervision of Dr Margaret Secombe and Dr Grant Rodwell.

Why am I being invited to participate?

You are being invited to participate as you are currently studying history at school and are in year 9 or 10.

What will I be asked to do?

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to take part in a 30 minute focus group, to be made up of 3-5 students, held at your school. This focus group will be asked to respond to questions relating to participants views on the teaching of history in schools. With participants' permission, this focus group discussion will be audio recorded. I will ask that all members of the focus group keep our conversation confidential.

How much time will the project take?

The focus group will be held only once at your school and is expected to take only 30 minutes of your time. This focus group will occur during school time.

Are there any risks associated with participating in this project?

It is possible, although not anticipated, that you may feel anxious while participating in the focus group. If you feel anxious you are able to decline to answer any questions and may leave the focus group if desired. You will also be able to access your school's counsellors.

What are the benefits of the research project?

While there may be no direct benefit to you in participating in this project, it is hoped that data collected by this project will form an indication of how well the history curriculum implemented under the Australian Curriculum is being received by key educational stakeholders and may help in future policy planning.

Can I withdraw from the project?

Participation in this project is completely voluntary. If you agree to participate, you can withdraw from the study at any time. Withdrawal from this project at any time will in no way affect your school grades.

What will happen to my information?

Your name and school will not be recorded with your data, and your details will not be used in any publications that use your data. The data will be stored on a secure server at the University of Adelaide for five years after which it will be deleted. Only the researchers will have access to your data. The data may be published in journal articles or used in conference papers; however you will not be identified. A summary of the results will be forwarded to the principal of the school when ready for you to access if you are interested.

Who do I contact if I have questions about the project?

If you have any questions about this project, please feel free to contact one of the researchers:

Dr Margaret Secombe

Telephone: [REDACTED]

Ms Claire Bloor

Telephone: [REDACTED]

What if I have a complaint or any concerns?

The study has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee at the University of Adelaide (approval number **H-2015-142**). If you have questions or problems associated with the practical aspects of your participation in the project, or wish to raise a concern or complaint about the project, then you should consult the Principal Investigator. Contact the Human Research Ethics Committee's Secretariat on phone (08) 8313 6028 or by email to hrec@adelaide.edu.au if you wish to speak with an independent person regarding concerns or a complaint, the University's policy on research involving human participants, or your rights as a participant. Any complaint or concern will be treated in confidence and fully investigated. You will be informed of the outcome.

If I want to participate, what do I do?

Please show this information to your parent/guardian. If you would like to participate please return the completed and signed form that is attached to this information sheet to your teacher. To participate, both you and your parent/guardian need to give permission by signing the Consent Form.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Margaret Secombe

Ms Claire Bloor

The University of Adelaide
Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC)

This document is for people who are participants in a research project.

**CONTACTS FOR INFORMATION ON PROJECT AND INDEPENDENT COMPLAINTS
PROCEDURE**

The following study has been reviewed and approved by the University of Adelaide Human Research Ethics Committee:

Project Title:	The Australian History Curriculum: Perspectives on a new national approach
Approval Number:	H-2015-142

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This research project will be conducted according to the NHMRC National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (see <http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/publications/synopses/e72syn.htm>)

1. If you have questions or problems associated with the practical aspects of your participation in the project, or wish to raise a concern or complaint about the project, then you should consult the project co-ordinator:

Name:	Dr Margaret Secombe
Phone:	M [REDACTED]
Name:	Ms Claire Bloor
Phone:	M [REDACTED]

2. If you wish to discuss with an independent person matters related to:
 - making a complaint, or
 - raising concerns on the conduct of the project, or
 - the University policy on research involving human participants, or

secretariat/ethics/human/complaints

Consent form for student participation

CONSENT BY A THIRD PARTY TO PARTICIPATION IN NON HEALTH/MEDICAL RESEARCH

I give consent to _____ 's involvement in the following research project:

Title:	<i>The Australian History Curriculum: Perspectives on a new national approach</i>
Ethics Approval Number:	H-2015-142

1. I have read the attached Information Sheet and have had the project, so far as it affects him/her, fully explained to my satisfaction by the research worker. My consent is given freely for my child to participate in a 30 minute focus group.
2. Although I understand the purpose of the research project it has also been explained that involvement may not be of any benefit to him/her.
3. It has also been explained that I have been given the opportunity to have a member of my family or a friend present while the project was explained to me.
4. I have been informed that, while information gained during the study may be published, he/she will not be identified and his/her personal results will not be divulged.
5. I understand that he/she is free to withdraw from the project at any time; a decision not to participate will in no way affect their academic standing or relationship with the **(school/site)** and they are free to withdraw their participation at any time
6. I understand that there will be no payment for (my child) taking part in this study.
7. I agree to the focus group being audio recorded. Yes No
8. I am aware that I should keep a copy of this Consent Form, when completed, and the attached Information Sheet.

Third Party (i.e. Parent/Guardian) to Participant to Complete:

Name: _____ Signature: _____

Relationship to participant: _____ Date: _____

Please turn over

Participant to Complete:

2013_consent_form_third_party_non_health_medical.docx

Name: _____ Age: _____

Participant signature: _____ Date: _____



Appendix F: The Interviews

TABLE 1: LIST OF PARTICIPANTS INTERVIEWED+

PARTICIPANTS	SOUTH AUSTRALIA	VICTORIA	WESTERN AUSTRALIA	TOTAL Interviews 28 [S, P & T]
SCHOOLS	SA1, SA2, SA3, SA4, SA5	V1	WA1, WA2, WA3	9
Student Focus Groups	SA1S1-3, SA2S1-4, SA3S1-4, SA4S1-5, SA5S1-5	V1S1-3	WA1S1-4, WA2S1-4, WA3S1-3	9
Parents	SA2P, SA3P1, SA3P2, SA3P3, SA4P		WA1P, WA2P,	7
Teachers*	SA1T, SA2T, SA3T, SA4T, SA5T	V1T	WA1T, WA2T, WA3T	9
HISTORY TEACHERS ASSOCIATION#	HTASA	HTAA from NSW	HTAWA	3

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+Participants have been identified by the initials of their state; the number of the research school they were involved with; and a parent number, in cases where there was more than one parent participating from a given school.

*Two of these teachers were involved in ACARA organized consultations on the ACHistory.

All of these were involved in ACARA led consultations on the ACHistory.

TABLE 2: PARTICIPANT RESPONSES USED IN ANALYSIS,
CHAPTERS 5-6

CHAPTERS	SOUTH AUSTRALIA	VICTORIA	WESTERN AUSTRALIA	TOTAL
CHAPTER 5 Purposes of History Education	SA1S1-3, SA2S1-4, SA3S1-4, SA4S1-5, SA5S1-5 SA2P, SA3P1, SA3P2, SA3P3 SA1T, SA2T, SA3T, SA4T HTASA	 V1T HTAA from NSW	WA1S1-4 WA3S1-3 WA1P, WA2P WA1T, WA2T, WA3T HTAWA	Data for Analysis from 24 Inter- views

CHAPTER 6	SA1S1-3, SA2S1-4, SA3S1-4, SA4S1-5, SA5S1-5	V1S1-3	WA1S1-4, WA2S1-4, WA3S1-3	Data for
The Consultation	SA2P, SA3P1, SA3P2, SA3P3, SA4P	V1T	WA1P, WA2P WA1T, WA2T, WA3T	Analysis from 27
Process	SA1T, SA3T, SA4T, SA5T HTASA	HTAA from NSW	HTAWA	Inter- views

TABLE 3: PARTICIPANT RESPONSES USED IN ANALYSIS,
CHAPTERS 7-8

<p>CHAPTER 7</p> <p>Place of Australian History</p>	<p>SA1S1-3, SA2S1-4, SA3S1-4, SA4S1-5, SA5S1-5</p> <p>SA2P, SA3P1, SA3P2, SA3P3, SA4P</p> <p>SA1T, SA2T, SA3T, SA4T, SA5T</p> <p>HTASA</p>	<p>V1S1-3</p> <p>V1T</p> <p>HTAA from NSW</p>	<p>WA1S1-4, WA2S1-4, WA3S1-3</p> <p>WA1P, WA2P</p> <p>WA1T, WA2T, WA3T</p> <p>HTAWA</p>	<p>Data for Analysis from 28 Interviews</p>
<p>CHAPTER 8</p> <p>Involvement of Common-</p>	<p>SA1S1-3, SA2S1-4, SA4S1-5, SA5S1-5,</p>	<p>V1S1-3</p>	<p>WA1S1-4, WA3S1-3</p> <p>WA1P</p>	<p>Data for Analysis</p>

wealth	SA2P, SA3P1, SA3P3, SA4P			from
Government	SA1T, SA2T, SA3T, SA4T, SA5T HTASA	V1T HTAA from NSW	WA1T, WA2T, WA3T HTAWA	24 Inter- views

EXAMPLE HTA MEMBER TRANSCRIPT

HTASA

C: Can you outline roughly for me how your association was involved in the development of the History curriculum?

State or national?

C: State. Sorry from the perspective of state.

Ah, the state was involved in preliminary discussions in ACARA, in what were consultative, in the consultative period of the Australian Curriculum. In the first instance, teachers were encouraged to attend and so were teaching members of the association. That consultative period involved very early on meetings in Melbourne, and then the travelling rollout consultative process which moved around the country. Usually involving generally mainly Tony Mackay from ACARA.

C: Did you have any personal involvement with the process?

In the actual writing or...?

C: Writing or state consultation.

Yes, absolutely. I was involved in consultative meetings and ah... the consultative process happened in a number of ways. Ah there was very early was a big general meeting, umm in Melbourne, Colling street. Sometime later the next stage involved the national feedback, so feedback about what was coming together. Then in NSW, so in Sydney, there was another gathering where association reps for R-10, and it involves, and look I have to say it was highly consultative. Predating that, now my very first contact with it would have been when we asked Dr Tony Taylor to speak at our national conference in something like... going back to almost 2010, 2009. Yeah. It was held in Prince Alfred College. So, Tony Taylor spoke about the process, by that stage he, well it's interesting, he said, I have to keep travelling round the country even though this model, this format and this curriculum is finished and we're going through new curriculum. Basically, he was saying that there was going to be a re-write.

C: So, are you overall happy with the involvement of the association in the consultation process?

Oh, I would say that we were given every opportunity to be involved, at the state level. There were more than enough opportunities to provide feedback and ah that was collective feedback and so the association members had more than enough opportunity to provide feedback. In both the sessions and also online.

C: you said at the state level, was it different at national?

I'd say, at first... well at first there was each, this is where it becomes very complicated because each of the states had their own events and then at times, we all came together. And we knew that was going to be consensus generally between the states and territories for the foundation to year 10. We were confident of that.

C: Were there any things that there wasn't a consensus on?

Straight away. You could see it was coming in the senior curriculum. (*C: Ok, so senior more*) Senior curriculum is quite fascinating in how that's played out.

C: That's just being rolled out now really.

South Australia, yes. When you say rolled out, there is an Australian Curriculum for the senior years, it actually exists, but in its current shape and form it's not workable. Ah, the document does not have... there's no fluency through the document. What you'll find with the current document is more what each state and territory desperately wants to keep in the curriculum. (*C: So, the left overs?*) Yes, the states and territories, I'll be very honest about this, were far more precious about what they taught at Year 11 or 12.

C: So, you didn't see that so much at the lower levels?

No, you did not. The key thing we did not want in Foundation to Year 10 is repetition.

C: Someone else said to me that the way they would teach say ancient Egypt in Year 7 was very different to the way a Year 3 teacher would, so they weren't too concerned about repetition. Would you be concerned about it?

No, I'm confident that...no. That totally depends, however, on the skilled practitioner. And this is where ACARA have up to this point, and Rob Randall openly said this in a meeting I attended so far, they've been AC and no ARA. So, the new curriculum, assessment and reporting, no. So in that sense, what we look at that, what we say is we need the professional support of professional development for teachers across South Australia and across the nation, so they can be more than competent in working through the curriculum with say Australian national identity in Year 6 and they're not engaging in repetition at Year 9 or 10 for example.

C: So overall would you say the development process was thorough?

Oh, I would have to say it was. It was. What we did find though was there was a disconnect between what some writers would put forward and the writing process. And what refinements occurred at, how should I say, bureaucratic level. And I think, I think that way, the writers were doing their very best to incorporate the genuine needs and concerns of the teachers, the practitioners in the classroom and when they incorporated some of these things, some of these ideas, they found that they had been either diluted or ignore in the bureaucratic process. And that, that, genuinely frustrated a number of writers. That's at the national level. There was also, I have to say, a good representation around the country of writers and writers across the nation. This is not an eastern seaboard dominated experience and I would yeah, I would say that it was very much across the state line.

C: Do you find that the curriculum caters for diversity amongst students?

The key... well again, the curriculum is... the diversity comes down to how well qualified and how well experienced and how well mettled teachers are in the classroom and by diversity, I mean accessibility, differentiation, I'm thinking of there in the classroom. Diversity in content?

C: Content and difference amongst student values and backgrounds, that sort of thing.

I'd say it does. I'd say it does because some of those units, say year 10 with the cultural history they are really a lot of fun, they're really exciting and students enjoy that and they're engaging with it. Umm, I think there's also one of the great strengths of the curriculum is that you know it allows teachers to explore what existed in Australia before, say for example prior to World War 1, the great war. You know and this concept of civil rights movements, and the workers movements, there's some very good work being done in those year levels. I can say now that we are very conscious in the HTAA, the associations generally, that history should not be about white men with guns, it's a lot more than that.

C: Do you think it has successfully avoided that?

I believe it has. Yes, the mandated topics of course the Great War and the second world war, but there's more than enough choice. That's another aspect of the curriculum that has been very much well received by teachers and that is you know there is choices. Teachers like choices. Teachers like options. Ah they get very comfortable when they see that. Yes, they can accept mandated tasks, but they do not oblige by a system where everything is mandated and I think that's a very wise thing to do.

C: I know in WA their curriculum is mandating topics a bit more now.

Yes, some of the different states are going through some very interesting times. The one that I'm really conscious of and care a great deal for the teachers there is Victoria. With the VELS and their process there seems to be rigidity, there seems to be a lack of flexibility and that's really disappointing and that's even reflected in the senior curriculum. They are precious about the revolution they can't let it go.

*C: Have you noticed much like that in South Australia since the review?
[Ambulance in the background so this question was unclear]*

No, I think people have just got on with the job. I really believe that. In South Australia the attitude was, ok this is what we are doing, ok tell us mostly how this works. How can we learn more? And that's where we step up to the plate, we said we need to provide workshops and professional development for early career, mid-career, late career teachers. And we actually now, we just ran, 3, 4 weeks ago, we ran a Saturday morning 4 hour workshop for forty preservice teachers (*C: I think I saw that in your Facebook group*) So there's genuine interest in learning, ok this is what we have to do, but there's so many ways we handle that. And one of the key things we've been driving is sessions called assessment beyond the essay. Not ignoring the role of essay, not ignoring the role of source analysis, but there's so many ways in which students can access history and demonstrate their knowledge, understanding, and skills in all these diverse ways it might be photo stories, it could be [missing word due to ambulance] atlases, could be empathetic essays, umm fantastic websites they can create. And that's what we're pushing out there and the mid-career teachers and the preservice teachers, are ok this... and most of all students need to have fun. They enjoy History.

C: Is there anything you would change about the curriculum in its current form?

No. And here's why, people are a bit changed out. They are over, they are beyond change; they want to stick with it and a good curriculum needs a good 4-5 years to sit. That's minimum, and then you work at it. Unless of course there is a major issue, but that issue is not present that we can see and it would be dealt with by now if it was.

C: What are your thoughts on the review? Were you happy with the associations' involvement?

So which review?

C: So, the Donnelly and Wiltshire review.

Yes, that review. We found it interesting and I can talk here from state and national level because I would not be parting, they would be very similar comments. You were dealing with almost a 2, 2-and-a-half-year consultative process to come up with the Australian Curriculum. The next Wiltshire and Donnelly review was done in, wasn't that like, if I recall, around about 6 months, and I know that our opportunity to have input into those points of discussion was very short as well, deadlines were quite brief. Umm, my predecessor from Western Australia on the national level, had a personal meeting with those two gentlemen, it would be worth chatting to her about that. Umm, we found that extraordinary. I think most teachers did, and anybody would. Plus, you're dealing with the input of thousands of teachers across the country who have millions of hours of experience, compared to two gentlemen selected by the minister. It just... it just doesn't need any comment really. It's intriguing.

C: So, are you satisfied with your association's involvement with the review?

We did everything we could to make points very clear in that review about suggested changes, and what we felt should change and what we should keep. Yet again we were offered but the timeframes for that was much shorter and the actual writing was longer process.

C: This one is a bit related. To what extent do you think party politics shaped the initial curriculum?

Ok. I think that people write histories and review this entire experience they will say one name got the ball rolling for history and they will say that was John Howard. And you'd have to say that's true. Most history teachers would have rejoiced when they heard that the first four disciplines slash subjects announced to be part of the [curriculum]. I fairly can remember sitting in the car and hearing on the radio Mathematics of course, Science, English, AND History. We for purely selfish reasons, it was terrific to see the recognition of the discipline of history. So, whether you like it or not, what happens after that, you have to say from that point onwards history is in the spotlight. The other subjects I have seen, to not be in stage 1 roll out, I have to say it wasn't to their advantage. They have more experience, but they never had the amount of consultative process, I really feel for the geographers, I feel terrible for say the languages, the performing arts, umm I think what they've had to deal with far more in uncertainty, and change.

C: How do you feel about, I suppose it's more in the primary years, History going back to SOSE essentially?

Well, it's not like it was set out. If you go back to one of the key points for the Australian Curriculum, it was that History would be its own special discipline, not and I remember quotes coming out in the press from certain ... about mish-mash of Geography, History, Civics, Citizenship and everything else that needs to go into that basket. Here was History, standalone with its independent unique skills which compliments and of course incorporates Geography. Would of course incorporate politics, ah Civics, the knowledge of what it means to be a citizen, an identity and when you are not, for example, how could you teach 1967

referendum without embracing, really rigorously examining the concept of national identity and citizenship and what it is and what it is not. The opportunities were there. So, I think any teacher would, could. To see what's happened now at Years 6 and 7, that's sorry below Year 7, Year 6 and below, umm you just scratch your head. A lot of head scratching is going on. I mean, we made our position clear and the state association on that, that we found it a little bit interesting.

C: The different view that I've got is WA. They seem quite ok with it.

Well, the clear thing is the group that we want to reach the most with our professional development are primary years teachers. The primary years teachers have to be masters of their discipline. They are extraordinary teachers, they are gifted at what they do and they balance that four, five different plates on sticks above their heads the whole time. They can't be members of every association; the cost would be too great. Hence you have, you know, some of these groups like HASS SA, for example, and different groups, and we are most respectful of what they do. We really are umm, but we are concerned that how do we ensure that those History skills that are going to flourish, stand out and be incorporated, make sure that they do not become diverted in any shape or form.

C: How important do you think it is to have a national History curriculum?

I think it's very important. To be honest with you, there's only 24 million of us, we know our population, it's not... if Britain can have a national curriculum, although they certainly have their issues, and other countries can, it would make sense. The other part of that is also I'm a federalist, but I think that you have to recognise my bias here and that's obvious from the roles I have. I think federally. I think state, there's no problem there, but I think state as part of the commonwealth. Ah, sorry your question again?

C: Ah, how important was it to have a national History curriculum?

It was. It is. Because what we had was in some cases, states not matching up, ah movement. And I accept that, there were families that moved, and they could be having repetition, and that's not just them there was not just History this was across the other subjects, and you know, we've got some Science, History teachers that are part of the big overall broader contexts of a young person's education. I think to remove any of that repetition was absolutely essential. It's silly. It also meant federally, economically resourcing. I think it is an excellent move. And the other part of that is creates unity across the nation, sharing the resources, groups helping each other across the country. Yeah.

C: Now I meant to ask this before. Are there any aspects of the curriculum, I think you have touched on it a bit, you think are well done? Any topics or anything like that.

Oh, I think, I think, from... I'll be honest with you, I see more, I see a curriculum come alive through the units of work that have been written, I see it come alive through what I see in the classroom, through skilled, helpful, sharing practitioners. I think, I'd be silly to point out one or two things, because I'd be biased, I'd be going through the topics I find fascinating and enjoyable. I think there's a lot in all of it, I think there's a great benefit in all of the curriculum. Umm, now I'm happy to talk about the senior curriculum in a moment, because I'm very passionate of that, highly proud of that, here in South Australia.

C: That's the version SACE is creating?

That's the very current version we're creating which is in the last stages of consultation, it has been written and the next step will be approval by the board. And we are expecting that within two months.

C: Very close then.

That's Stage 1, Stage 2. And in my opinion, I believe that other states and territories will look at this curriculum and be very interested in its content, in its connections across the two year levels, and how it brings a lot of strands together, and how it really places Australia in where it is geographically, politically, and it's highly relevant.

C: Is it very closely matched to what is on the Australian Curriculum website or not really?

It's used that as a base and then we rebuilt it. So now you have 6 units of work for example. For example, in Stage 2 you'll have 6 units of work where you will do a depth study on the usual suspects. United States, Nazi Germany, Russia, China, Indonesia, Australia. Then the next 6 will be made up of Australia and it's engagement with Asia, self-determination in Asia, the at least challenges for the United Nations, challenges for world security, so you starting to see units, umm incredibly important, and for students today, also we are looking at a curriculum that will be still relevant in 15 years' time.

C: It's sort of brought in that cross-curriculum priority of Australia's engagement with Asia, that isn't really there anymore is it?

I would have to say students in South Australia will have more opportunity than ever, to do thorough, deep, highly engaged studies with nations throughout South East Asia, and we have said the Pacific region. Ok.

C: So, some of our closer neighbours as well.

Absolutely. So, you know, you will find that the students in Year 12 in two years' time, the current Year 10s, will be the first group to do it in Year 12 in 2018. So, students could do Nazi Germany, for example, in the first half of Year 12 and then progress in the second semester and do a detailed study of Cambodia.

C: I suppose you do have the repetition there a bit with the Year 10s and World War 2, then Nazi in Year 12...

Yeah you do, but they're different. The total different angle will be you're doing a depth study on Germany, you're not doing World War 2. And you're not doing Australia's perspective. If you want to do Australian history, the line exists very nicely there as well in both parts of the course. And of course, we're reducing the exam to two hours and the only assessed part in the exam will come in the semester that involves the usual suspects. So that allows freedom of assessment and diversity of assessment through moderation for the other 6 topics you do in the other semester which are more diverse.

C: History teaching in school seems to generate a lot of comment in the media, why do you think that is?

Well, first and foremost, education will always get comments from the media because everybody has been to school. So, everyone's an expert, everyone has an experience, and why not? That's fine, that's fine. If more people talk about education, and if people talk about, passionately about education, as passionately about as they talk about sport, Australian football in Australia, I'd welcome that

any day, I really would. Umm it will always be there because, and rightly so, people want to know about their past, err for all sorts of reasons. One colleague from another subject area, came up to me in the early days of ACARA and said you History guys are really lucky, you're like the rock gods of curriculum, because all the kids want to learn History and they're interested in it. And in a way we're fortunate. We have to be conscious that it is in the media, for all sorts of reasons. There are excellent documentaries, there are some very poor documentaries, but there are some very excellent documentaries. You have historical fiction, you have historically based movies, it reels the public in, and they always want to know. Australian's are starting to understand, also all of our history, that very important history, especially the Australian history pre-settlement and start to understand the nature of frontier conflict here in Australia and ask very good questions about how has history been managed in the past when we recorded Australian history, especially from settlement, European settlement and its impact, uh and every other stage right through to first Australians. And I think the more the student and the more the public engage with those issues, I think it's better for the nation, I think it is better for every person in this country.

C: What was the most recent thing in the media? It was about one of the universities referring to invasion instead of settlement.

I think they chose invasion. It was the University of NSW. Well, it's hard to disagree with it. I mean, I'd like to know, I mean a classic would be... you know. And one of the great things in the Australian Curriculum is arguably that experience for first Australian's and doing a comparative study with first nation's people of the America's. I mean, this... and civil rights, students' love the civil rights movement studies, for example Year 10. They really engage with it. Umm and the students are now seeing Doug Nicholls, and Charles Perkins, they're our heroes. You know, they are Australian heroes, and you know, I know that's sounds like a silly bland term, but geez we need, we need those. Leaders. They are fantastic. They are great stories and the more we have those being heralded in our curriculum, well the better the curriculum will be. I think, the great thing about history is the more you know, the less you know. You realise the less you know. And that should create a thirst and hunger in young people, but also all Australians. You know, and the migrant experience. History is that one subject that involves empathy, it involves understanding, and it you walking in another person's shoes, and we need that more than ever on earth. We really do, amongst humanity, you know.

C: Any particular reason for saying that?

I think so, because we see more and more division. You know, you turn on the television you see politics of fear. You us and them terms being used. Compartmentalising, umm creating borders. People talk about building walls. Very sad individuals try to become nominated as the republican people for the you know the leader of the United States, you know comments made there that are just nonsensical. So harmful. Umm you know, because we are in a world now where travel has never been more accessible and yet, people are becoming more insulated or isolated in a psychologically. So, you know, I think... I mean the classic would be the great stories if you were going to do migration experience to Australia in Year 10, the South Australian governor, it is a marvellous, great Australian story. You know arrives in Darwin in 1975 with a plastic bag of his possessions. That's it.

C: Yeah, actually when I graduated Year 12, we had him at our valedictory dinner.

He's a lovely man and his wife. Just great people. Umm and out of this, this is the good thing about our subject, you know, for example I saw a class today of Year 12s who had finished our unit on Nazi Germany and you finish with the holocaust, you finish with the genocide and you say, the world is in a lot of trouble for the middle part of the 20th century, it was in a great danger of peril with fascism, nationalism, and imperialism, because we had them in the past. We had imperialism and its horrors for centuries but all this history happened at once, and afterwards we saw. And then after that what would you say was one of the great success stories of the second half of the 20th century? And it's Germany. It's a great story. And what nation is at the centre and actually has a government the centre of saying no, we need to do something for Syrian refugees. Which nation is it more than the others still? It's Germany. And I think to the point where the chancellor, putting her career on the line, politically, saying 'No, this is what we do for humanity'. Courageous. Things the students are studying now.

C: I suppose it is a bit of a contrast to Australia really.

Yes. Yes, it is. Well, you know, I'm the grandson of someone who entered the country illegally. He was an Irish lad who was bonded to a ship and he called into Australia and he jumped ship when they arrived. He didn't enter legally. He joined the RAF went over the western front and was wounded and comes home and settles in Adelaide. And there are thousands like him. I'm not sure why we have this last person come in and shuts the door and bolts it. I don't understand this, I don't understand it. And that's partly and now teach, and I take two tour groups to Vietnam, we have a pilgrimage from our school and we go to Vietnam and it's partially also my rationale behind why I learn Vietnamese because I need the excuse. I feel, hello, Australia is not in the Mediterranean, and it's not north of Scotland, it's in Asia-Pacific, and let's celebrate that. Let's celebrate that. And this is, honestly, it's like Donald Trump, what doesn't he get? He's in the Americas, did he not notice? Yes, white Anglo-Americans will be a minority, in you know, four, five, ten years, some demographers say. So what? It's the Americas. I don't understand this. It's like it's just bizarre for people to be saying ridiculous things about Australia and Asian and saying well, have a look where we are. This is our future. This is fantastic.

C: I suppose it's linked in a way to the push for Judeo-Christian heritage to be in the curriculum.

Exactly. Exactly.

If you herald one religious tradition or political tradition, you better be able to accept its flaws as well as its strengths, because that's what balanced history is about.

EXAMPLE TEACHER TRANSCRIPT

WA3T

C: How long have you been a History teacher?

In lower school, 22 years. I've actually never taught upper school History even though I'm History trained. I've only ever taught 7 to 10 History.

C: I think my next question to you should probably be, which curriculum are you currently using?

We are using the WA version of the Australian Curriculum. We've jumped in fairly early with the Australian Curriculum and have kind of made a few fortunate decisions. So, for us to jump from what we were doing to the WA curriculum really wasn't a big change. We had to drop a few things and tailor a few things, but yeah.

C: So, you haven't had to drop any topics that you were teaching?

Look, we haven't really dropped anything from two years ago, but from what we were teaching 5 or 6 years ago when we first started down the Australian Curriculum path, yeah, we've made some changes and a few alterations along the way.

C: Did you study much history as part of your degree?

Yeah, I did four semester units when I did my degree and then obviously within my Dip.Ed. I did a bit more upskilling.

C: So, you went into teaching knowing you would want to teach History?

Yeah.

C: Going back to the Australian Curriculum, did you think that Australian history was covered in enough depth?

At [school] I think yes. We historically have had a fairly traditional curriculum, if you want to call it that. So, we've done a term of each social science discipline, but really the broad ideas we were studying haven't changed a lot, because we were doing ancient history, we were doing industrial revolution, WW1, WW2, so kind of the big ideas are still there.

C: So, the same sort of approach?

Yeah, maybe the emphasis within a unit has tweaked or changed, but pretty much it's the same as what we've done.

C: How important do you think a world history approach in the curriculum is?

I actually think very important. Whilst we had a focus on Australia in the world and one of our topics used to be Australia in the world, many moons ago, I think it is important simply because you've got to have that global perspective. Even when I first got into teaching 20 years ago, we were talking about global perspectives back then and the rise of Asia. So, I think in the modern world it is certainly important to know the history of more than where you are at.

C: Do you feel that Australian Curriculum does that well or has room to improve?
Umm, I think it does, but in a strange way it has come at a cost. When we had a little bit more flexibility we used to be able to include more world content than we did, so we used to be able to do a topic on Japanese history unit or a Japanese unit within social sciences which was mainly history but had a bit of culture as well and at one stage when we launched into Australian Curriculum we were doing a unit on Mongolian history, which now the WA curriculum has dropped, because we don't have any choice in the extra depth study. It is Black death after medieval history. So, in some ways we maybe had more interaction with world history than we do now, which is kind of a bit of an interesting element to it.

C: So, going to your own teaching, which topics in the curriculum have you found you've had the most success with? So that could be either under WA curriculum or Australian Curriculum.

Umm, we actually had a lot of success with the Mongolian topic at Year 8, which was one of the ones we've had to drop. That was a really interesting unit and it followed on from medieval history. There were some great comparisons that you were able to do. So that was one that we kind of yeah... a lot of other schools didn't do it. A lot of other schools in WA did the Black Death and I think they went with the safety of where the majority of schools were at and it's logical. Medieval history into the Black Death they sort of dove tail together. (*C: resources as well probably*) Yeah, but umm that's certainly one we were able to have a really good crack at. Maybe the first year we scratched our heads and kind of went what are we doing, but we came up with some really interesting ways of tackling it, and it was at the end of it we found the students were really getting into these comparisons and contrasts between Mongolian culture and European culture. Yeah, it just seemed to work.

C: Have there been any topics that you haven't had much success with or have found a bit difficult to teach?

We did try after teaching Mongolian topic, the same period in Year 8, we did Japanese history, Shogun. Once again great comparison with Samurai vs knights, and the like, but that was one that we actually struggled with simply in terms of the resources that we were using at the time. They were probably pitched beyond Year 8 level so we had to do a lot of simplification and alteration of resources.

....

C: Do you think the current curriculum that you are using takes into account the backgrounds of your students?

In many ways no. Like a lot of our students, and I can't give you a number, but a lot of our students are Greek, Italian, really in that post world war migrant era of Australian history or that's when sort of their links to Australia began. So, I think in many ways what we're having to teach in 7-10 doesn't really tap into their background. I mean if that's the keyword in that question, backgrounds of the students, then I would say maybe not. I mean we don't have a big Islander community; we don't have umm sort of any of the communities that would sort of easily latch up to some of those alternatives in the depth studies. You know they could have been really interesting in a different context. But for us, if you sort of look at the background of most of our kids, I mean we've got a large section of our school that would be multigenerational Australian and I suppose the Year 9 topics World War 1, World War 2, yeah there's probably some interesting

background sort of work that you can do there, but you know for those kids I've done it in the past and said 'right would anyone have a World War or World War 2 ancestor?' and a lot of the kids it's no, we came to Australia in the 50s. Not unless you can get us in contact with the Italian archives.

C: Despite that do you find they connect well with the topics in History and are able to relate to it a bit?

Some topics more than others. I think the Year 8 topics in particular, students do connect with more. The industrial revolution stuff I think that that's challenging for different reasons. I don't think that's as of much interest to the students. (*C: Is that why you find it challenging? Interest?*) I think, yeah. We're just about to start the World War 1 depth study so it will be interesting to see whether it's just this cohort, but if last year is anything to go by... we'll see what happens.

C: Do you find the curriculum readily adaptable?

What do you mean by adaptable? (*C: So, do you find your able to adapt the topics to meet your students' interests? Or do you find it is hard with prescribed content to meet their interests?*) I think it has been difficult to adapt up to this point in time simply because we've been dealing with constant change and maybe haven't had the time to really drill down into how we can adapt it, and I think that's a question we're only really starting to ask now. Now that we've got some certainty on what we're teaching at what year level, what resources we are going to be able to use for the students and the question of textbooks, that's really something that we've only really nussed down in the last 6 months. So now that all of those things have lined up that's something we're going to be working on, but it hasn't been easy within the parameters that we've had so far to make it really adaptable for the students' benefit.

C: So, from your perspective do you think the WA curriculum will make it a bit easier in terms of textbooks and things like that?

No. I actually think it's going to make it harder because there are differences between the states. I think it will be more challenging because if you're a national publisher, how do you cater for those differences in a marketable way and a cost-effective way? I've had a couple of discussions with publishers and I think they're scratching their heads and to a point playing catch up to where education ministers have taken things. And I think that's been a problem because schools then, I mean we've been writing some in house resources because we couldn't find anything that was cost effective for our school's context. But that seems to be changing, but how much it changes, yeah, we'll wait and see.

C: Do you think that History should be a compulsory subject for school students?

Yes, definitely. I always have. As I said we've always had a traditional approach with the four disciplines. We've always seen it as a vital part of what we offer, but also what the students should be exposed to.

C: Who do you think should determine what is included in the curriculum?

Good question. I chuckled at that one. I'm not really sure, I mean in some regards you can understand that there's an argument for a national approach, but then you can understand that there are state differences. But at the end of the day, and there's an argument that actually says teachers are the best to determine what's best for their students and if you've got a group that is a bit different maybe having the flexibility to do something different with them is good, but then, yeah,

you don't want people going too far off on tangents. So, I don't really have an answer for you.

C: What role do you think the federal government should play in it?

I think there's some role for them, and it's not a bad thing to have some maybe let's say they are a national approach or a standard approach I think to maybe avoid some of the people going off onto tangents. You know, I think having some guidance or some set of guidelines nationally, I don't think that's a bad thing. And maybe I think what we saw with John Howard and the push with the original sort of shape of the history curriculum, I think maybe that was overstepping the grounds a bit, I just think there was not so much party politics coming into it, but I think there was a fairly conservative view on how history should be structured across Australia.

C: Is there any particular reason why you feel like that?

I just think it ignore the other disciplines in our area, you know History was given such a focus but it ignored Economics, Geography, Economics and Law, Civics and Citizenship as it's mostly referred to. And I just think it was an agenda pushed by the Howard government, for right or for wrong, but I just think it was an agenda that was pushed that seemed to be very heavy with its focus on History.

C: With the Australian Curriculum itself did you feel there was one political ideological leaning or did you think it was fairly neutral?

I think it was fairly neutral given the elements of some of the topics if you have a look at the rise of trade unions and Year 9 etcetera. I think in terms of left and right politics in Australia I think it was fairly neutral and I think there was a balance that you could achieve in there.

C: Have you seen those [the 2014 review findings] before?

I have, yes.

C: What are your views on those findings overall?

I think, well, in terms of number 1) the impact and significance of Australia's western and Judeo-Christian heritage, I don't have too much of a problem with that. Having been involved, not in the History curriculum formation, but in the formation of the Phase 3 Politics and Law, you know there's lots of agendas were pushing different wheelbarrows and I take it, it was the same with History. So, I don't have a problem with that. I think when push comes to shove, we were set up as a Judeo-Christian nation and certainly the impact of Western civilisation—once again we are, even though we are an Asian nation, multi-cultural, you know we are tied into Western European history. I think there's the ability to acknowledge within that the impact and significance of other civilisations. So, I think that precludes us from looking at the impact of Islamic history and sort of society over time or any of the others. The overall conceptual narrative that underpins- I think that's a good idea. I think it can be hard to weave that narrative or at least from where I'm standing. Well put it this way I think it's going to be hard to actually weave that overall narrative in a way that makes sense to a Year 8 or Year 9 student. I don't think it's a bad idea though, but the challenge will be sort of really making that obvious to the students, because I think in a way so many of the topics in the time that we've got can become disconnected as you say, episodic historical developments. Revision of choice. Like, that was an interesting one, I think in a way the revision of choice has limited us here at [school name], but I

think there was some head scratching in our department at the huge variety of choice and how you actually compare that across schools. And I think the last comment... I think that that is important the emphasis on imparting historical knowledge and understanding central to the discipline. I actually think that's pretty important. You know we're seeing students come through who for many, many reasons seem to lack some basic understandings that we see as central to what we teach. And also, just general knowledge, so I think that's not a bad thing if that can actually be sort of put into play. But speaking as a parent whose kids are in primary school, yeah, I wouldn't want to be a primary school teacher having to deal with their over-laden curriculum. (*C: They have a tough job.*) Oh they do, I totally take my hat off to them. So, I think that anything that can be done to develop that or further develop that because it certainly is developed, the basics are there, but, and it may not be just taught by primary school, you know, parents, society, I think there's wider implications there.

C: Have you noticed many changes since the review in 2014?

Administrative changes, yes. Certainly, the way here in WA, our school standards and curriculum authority. Let me get the name right SCSA, umm, certainly the way that they've repackaged things integrating the four disciplines into one rather than treating them as separate phase entities. You know, here there has been a lot of change in the way they've been packaged and developed, but I don't think I've seen... certainly it's way too early to have seen too many differences in the students we've got coming through.

C: Do you feel that the views of teachers were taken into account when the curriculum was first developed?

I'm not sure not having been part of the process or that particular process. I think yes and no. I think looking at it you can certainly see that there has been some input from a wide variety of teachers and teaching groups, but as I said before I know that, through my involvement in the politics and law or the civics and citizenship framework and the forming of that, that there were lots of different agendas being pushed there and groups having input into that process. (*C: Was that for the WA curriculum?*) No, that was the national. So, look, I think the views were taken into account, but how much other agendas came in over the top of that I don't know. I'm a bit sceptical maybe when it comes to that.

C: History teaching seems to generate a lot of interest in the media, I've noticed, do you have a theory as to why that might be?

Yeah, I think it was because it was the number one discipline in our area sort of formed under this curriculum review. You know I think it just attracted attention because it was number one and it was given sort of the arguments or the conversation around it, that Howard era time, and flowing on from there I think there was some wider issues that were coming into there, such as immigration, the role of Islamic migrants and Islamic history. You know, you could almost see there was a bit of reflection on wider developments in Australian society and how that fitted into, or was reflected in the teaching of history. So, I think there was a little bit of a political agenda maybe, possibly creeping into what was being put together, but I think maybe just because it was a phase 1. It was the one that was picked to go first. I mean, if you go back a little bit further in time Politics and Law, or Civics and Citizenship was getting a bit of a go through the Discovering Democracy program. It was nowhere near as high profile but it was kind of in the news. You would see it bubbling away here and there. I think the last ten to 12

years it has kind of been History's turn to have the spotlight put on it. (*C: So, you think it might move to something else soon?*) I think it has. Well, not within, not if you look at the laughable language that is being thrown around the last couple of years. It has been coding and now all of sudden STEM, although I see we've moved from STEM to STEAM, Science Technology Engineering and Maths. All of a sudden A has crept in there, the discourse is changing, the discussion is changing and I think maybe sort of the spotlight has moved a little bit on from History. And I think we've seen a lot talk which I wouldn't say has led nowhere, because we have had change, you know some of the other discussions that came into the teaching and education field, you know, the education revolution under Labor, the idea of salary tied to performance, a lot of those other things have kind of taken the spotlight out of the bread and butter of what it is that kids should be learning in school.

Example Parent Transcript

SA3P1

C: So, did you study History in school?

Yes, I did.

C: And what year level did you study it up to?

I studied it up to I think around Year 10.

C: And was it compulsory?

It was compulsory.

C: And moving to your own child, how aware are you of what they study in History at the moment?

Umm, not hugely aware, only basically. I wouldn't have a whole plan of what the curriculum is from say umm junior school to senior school, but as a yearly thing I sort of keep in touch with what the kids are actually doing. I've currently got, like my youngest one, he's in Year 6, he's doing refugees and stolen generation and I know my Year 9 son is currently just finished the Industrial Revolution. So, it's basically on a year by year basis but if you asked me if I knew what the whole curriculum is through the whole thing, I wouldn't have any idea, no.

C: I think even teachers might struggle without looking. So, you'd see them doing homework and that's why you have an idea?

Yeah, we usually basically have with homework we ask what are you currently doing in history? What are you doing in say with maths or whatever? So that's the way we format.

C: So how important would you say it is for school students to learn about history?

I think it's really important, and reason being because I think they need to have a really good understanding of the country that they live in. And I think it's really good for the development of the child, their characteristics, umm yeah, problem solving skills, all off the above.

C: And you think History is a good way of developing problem-solving skills?

Yeah, I do, yeah.

C: What sort of history do you think school students should learn, so say Australian, or world history?

Umm look, I think number one priority is Australian history, but umm with current experience with both of my boys, I've found particularly in junior school I actually thought it was very repetitive and the kids seem to every year, year 4, 5,6 be going over the same type of thing. Umm and ah what's important currently to our family is European history, because my husband is Czech so umm, I find even when I've look up to see when [son] would be covering European history, I think the areas that are currently missing are European history and American history. So, I think the rest is pretty well covered, but that's probably from a personally family point of view, but I just think American history and European history are a little bit light on currently. So, I would like my sons to do a little bit more in that area, but I think everything else is covered pretty well.

C: I might skip ahead to this question. To what extent do you feel that the history taught in schools reflects your own family background?

Oh, umm well, I'm Australian so that's pretty well covered, but unfortunately I think my husband's family, being Czech, they came out in 1968 as refugees when the Russians invaded Czechoslovakia, I think that's been completely missed so European history is a little lacking, I think, and that's really important from our family perspective. So we've personally as a family covered that a bit ourselves, if there's been areas, particularly in the primary school where they've been able to nominate an area that they'd like to study in we've actually really directed it into my husband's family situation when they fled the country so that they have an understanding of it. And we've done things like big boards with displays with, assisted them with, like when my husband left and he fled and went over the Austrian border, so we've done little diagrams and stuff like that and sort of encouraged them with some of their assignments to actually cover that.

C: Are there any topics in history you feel aren't appropriate for students?

No. That's the real world, it's the world we live in and I think everything needs to be covered to be quite honest.

C: Would you think certain things needs to be at higher year levels or...?

No, I think it's pretty age appropriate.

C: Ok, who do you feel should determine what is taught in History lessons?

Oh, what like from a school system or teachers? Or? Umm that's a hard one for me to answer because I'm not sure who implements the History program in general, I don't have an understanding of who, as a parent, who actually sets? Is it a group of teachers? Is it a government organisation? I think government has a bit of a part in it, don't they? I think if that is the case, you'd have to show me what percentage is input from the teachers, what percentage is government input, I'm not sure about that.

C: How important do you feel it is for parents like yourself to have a say in things like the development of the curriculum?

I think it's important, yes, I do.

C: Did you know that you were able to submit comments to things like the review that occurred in 2014?

No. I wasn't aware of that at all.

C: If you were aware do you think you would have?

Probably yes, and I say that because both of my sons in junior school had come to me and said 'Oh mum, this curriculum just keeps going over and over the Australian history and we would like to do something else'. And that's probably the only reason why.

C: To what extent do you feel the views of parents were taken into account when the curriculum was developed?

Probably none.

C: So, if you were going to have a say on what was going in the curriculum do you think you'd lessen the amount of Australian history or just try to streamline a bit more?

I'd streamline it a bit more, it just seems, and again I'm going back to the junior school, the middle senior school seem to get a really good cross section from what I've seen with my eldest son, but the junior school seem to be, the curriculum

seems to rehash continually. When I was in junior school I remember I umm did Australian history but I seemed to do quite a bit of Asian history as well, and I think by the impression I currently get I think they only start doing that in Year 7 and 8 they touch Asian history, so yeah. It is different.

C: What role do you think the federal government should have in determining the History curriculum?

Umm, I think a big role. As I said previously I think it's really important that Australian history is umm encouraged because, I mean, we've just recently travelled to America and over there the kids are all geared for their American history, and they know all their American history inside out and back to front and are really proud of their country so, look I think it's an important part of our Australian way of life and, yes I think the federal government do need to have quite a bit of input into it.

C: What about state governments?

I think they should all combine together and work together to be honest. I'm not keen on this state decides this and federal does this. I think they all need to combine together.

C: So, have a united approach?

Mmhmm.

C: Ok, so my final question is what is your opinion on History being a compulsory subject for kids?

In which year level? Oh, just in general. Oh absolutely, that's a no brainer.

C: Speaking of year levels, at what point would you say they shouldn't have it as compulsory anymore?

Uh, 11 and 12. Year 10 I think it should be, but Year 11 and 12 you're really getting to the pointy end of your education and you're directing yourself into what career point you want to go into. So, I think after that, and I think up until that age anyway, you pretty well should have had an opportunity to cover everything anyway. I mean if you've got a passion and you want to go and teach History or umm whatever, I think then continue it on, but I think otherwise. Yeah, Year 10.

Example Student Focus Group Transcript

V1

C: Ok, so what do you like about History lessons? So, you might call it something different like Humanities or Social Sciences.

S1: Just the diversity of all the subjects and all the topics that we cover. Just all the time periods and everything. It's just such a wide variety and it's always interesting in each class.

S2: Umm since we started, we've sort of moved forward through time, so I've liked the chronology of it, umm and like a lot of it ties in and stuff so it's very interesting.

C: So, you like seeing how everything connects together?

S2: yep

S3: I don't really like History.

C: That's fine because that's my next question. Is there anything you don't like about History?

S3: I don't like the sadness of it all and like the things that like people did.

C: So, things like...

S3: Like the wars and executing and stuff.

S2: Umm some of the work, but most of it's fine. I don't like doing, we do a lot of stuff where we have to put ourselves in the perspective. I don't like that; I don't know why. I just find it hard to connect sometimes.

C: So, you find it hard to connect, say, I don't know, an Ancient Egyptian?

S2: Yeah, that sort of thing.

S1: Some of the assessment tasks like comparative studies between different decades or times. Sometimes it's a lot to take in since so much stuff happened. It's just a bit outside of my comfort zone, I guess.

C: Are there any particular comparisons you have trouble with?

S1: Ah, there was a task we did not too long ago between the 1920s and the 1930s, it was a bit odd writing it. I felt just like keeping up with all the different events, there was a lot.

C: Now are you guys in Year 9 or 10?

S2: 10.

C: What sort of history do you think you should be taught? So, what sort of things do you think it's important for you to learn about?

S3: Umm, like the Holocaust and like Australian history.

C: Why do you think we should learn about them?

S3: Umm like the Holocaust because we should learn from it, and like learn from what we could do differently if it happens again and so we're more educated on it. And umm Australian history because I think it's important to like where we live and what happened to get to how it is today.

S2: Same thing with like wars just to learn from them and try not to make the same mistakes.

S1: Like how wars started what led up to them, that sort of things we can take away from the Holocaust, the just needless aggression. Learn from previous mistakes.

C: And I think I overheard that you're learning about the Holocaust now?

S3: Yes.

C: What is your opinion about the amount of Australian history you're learning in school? Do you think it's enough, not enough, about right?

S1: I think there needs to be more. We do a lot of stuff to do with completely different places, but I feel like we don't know enough about Australia itself.

C: Why do you think you feel like that?

S1: Well, I just like, if I ever like have a think about what happened I don't know enough, like much compared to other things. Not enough detail and such.

C: What sort of Australian history would you like to learn? I know it's hard if you don't already know it. So, things like Prime ministers, convicts...?

S1: Yeah, maybe.

C: What about you [S3] do you think you learn enough Australian history or would you like to learn more?

S3: Umm, Australian history? I think we should learn more, because like we don't really, like last year we learnt about Aboriginals and then that's about it. Like we haven't really learnt much.

S2: Umm I think there's certainly a place for more. Last year we did a bit more, more learning around Aboriginals today, but I'd like to get more history, like what happened in the decades leading up to the stolen generations and even just how it's all come together, our country as a whole.

C: Yep. Do you know much about Federation, how that happened? [no verbal response] Ok, to what extent do you find the history you learn about in school relevant to you? So, do you think it's a subject you'll use much outside of school? If you don't know, that's fine.

S1: Yeah, I'm not too sure.

S3: Umm I think it's important to know, but it's not necessarily something that we would use outside of school unless you want it to become your story or something.

C: Do you think the history you learn has much to do with your family? So, your family background and where your family has come from?

S3: Sometimes.

S1: Yeah, sometimes.

C: Ok, what's your opinion on History being compulsory, so you having to learn it?

S2: I think it should be.

C: Why do you say that?

S2: Umm just like for the general understanding of things. It helps to umm properly inform people about what's happening and what's happened sort of thing.

S1: I absolutely think it should be compulsory at least, well just World War 1 and World War 2 and some Australian history. There's always VCE classes if you want to extend that, but I always appreciate having learnt what history is all about in the first place.

S3: umm yeah, I think it should be compulsory until Year 10, but I also think that some of the things we learn aren't really relevant. Like when we did Vikings and stuff, I don't think that's really important and instead we should have done like Australia history or something like that.

C: So, you didn't enjoy the Vikings?

S3: I just don't find it really relevant.

C: Who do you think should decide what you learn about in History? So, if there was a choice between Vikings and Australian history, who do you think should be making that decision?

S2: Maybe we should be given a choice. Just so we can decide what is more important to learn about, I guess.

C: so, you'd like to be given options?

S2: Yeah, just to get rid of some of the less necessary subjects.

C: *Ok, how far do you think the Federal government should have a role in deciding what you learn about in History? So that's the government in Canberra.*

S1: umm, I'm not sure.

S3: They should have like a little bit of a say, but not a lot.

C: *Yep, why do you think that?*

S3: I don't really know.

C: *It's hard when you haven't really thought about it before. Now, we talked about this one as well, how much of a say do you think you guys should have in deciding what you learn about in History? Do you think it should be a large one or a small one and mainly up to your teachers? Or someone else?*

S1: I think it should be a small one, but just big enough to make an influence into what we do. So, like if there's certain activities or whatever in our topic that we're about to do and we don't feel that it will help us we can do something a bit more relevant to how we learn.

C: *So that's about what you actually do in the classroom rather than the topic itself?*

S1: Yep.

C: *Ok, is there anything you'd change about the History you're learning in school?*

S1: Not currently.

S2: Probably have a little but more Australian history, but otherwise it's pretty good.

S3: Yeah, I'd agree with [S2].

C: *Ok, my last question for you is do you think you'll decide to do history in Year 11 or 12?*

S1: Yep.

C: *Yep? Why do you think you'll do it?*

S1: Well, I've already chosen it.

C: *Why did you choose it?*

S1: I just liked the umm like the, just knowing what happened. It just really interests me, I don't know why, but it does.

S2: Definitely. History has always fascinated me, especially stuff from the 20th century, which is what they offer here. So, I love learning about all that.

S3: No. I'm just not interested in it.

C: *What do you guys want to do after school? If you know.*

S2: I sort of want to be involved in the film industry, so I thought having a knowledge of history would be helpful in some way. Towards some things.

S1: I kind of want to get into maybe the drama sort of areas, and if not maybe become a teacher. Maybe teach History or something else.

S3: Umm I think I want to be like a psychologist.

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