

# CURRICULUM REPORT

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At the 2018 Federal Conference one Curriculum motion was presented which requested that ICPA (Aust) lobby for Primary Production to be included as a compulsory component of the national curriculum. While “Agriculture” is currently included in the Australian Curriculum, specific reference to Primary Production is being sought by ICPA members as “Agriculture” has been open to interpretation as to how and what is taught by individual states, schools and teachers. Members wish to see the actual process of growing Australian food and fibre taught in schools to create an awareness of where food and fibre come from as well as the process required in providing it.

Federal Council have had discussions with the Primary Industries Education Foundation Australia (PIEFA) <https://www.piefa.edu.au/> to discuss their vision to create an understanding of and value for the primary industries sector in the Australian community. The discussions have focussed on how PIEFA initiatives, including their web portal “Primezone” which aims to provide teachers with single-point access to a range of primary industries educational supplies, may be used to achieve a more accurate and thorough primary production curriculum in schools across Australia. Federal Council has also raised and discussed with the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) the need for the inclusion of specific Primary Production curriculum with it being acknowledged that Agriculture is not being effectively included in the current curriculum. However, while Agricultural materials have been a focus of improvement for ACARA over the past few years, it is up to the states how they offer certain subject units within the curriculum. Federal Council sees this as an area where State and Federal Councils can work together to try to initiate change within the respective systems.

ICPA (Aust) is encouraged to see where individual States have taken on board opportunities for Primary Production to feature accurately in their respective state curriculum. In April, the NSW Department of Education announced that beginning in 2020, an Agriculture and Food unit will be compulsory in public secondary schools alongside a range of other measures to increase agricultural education in their state. *Agriculture to Be a Mandatory Unit in New South Wales High Schools* – ABC 22 Nov 2018 <https://www.abc.net.au/news/rural/2018-11-22/agriculture-to-be-mandatory-unit-in-nsw-schools/10518776>

ICPA (Aust) is pleased to see the issue being raised in the media (*Push for Kids to Stay Close to Food Source*- the Australian 28-4-2019 [https://www.theaustralian.com.au/nation/politics/push-for-kids-to-stay-close-to-food-source/news-story/9a09b76730c0c012ec4801749cf2a1eb?fbclid=IwAR2ZKCcwmPS7Wq71pv9GOsHW6llcbdv\\_dVrcwAvjkjmxW9FdqWMkVfSvzho](https://www.theaustralian.com.au/nation/politics/push-for-kids-to-stay-close-to-food-source/news-story/9a09b76730c0c012ec4801749cf2a1eb?fbclid=IwAR2ZKCcwmPS7Wq71pv9GOsHW6llcbdv_dVrcwAvjkjmxW9FdqWMkVfSvzho))

The issue of primary production being taught within curriculum has been a “hot topic” in several states and has also been raised at ICPA State Conferences. Federal Council will continue to work with State Councils and to support one another to advocate for the accurate portrayal of Primary Production in the Curriculum across the country and a focus on the importance of teaching where food and fibre comes from in an unbiased platform.

Throughout the past year, ICPA (Aust) has maintained its relationship with ACARA, now under the Leadership of new CEO David de Carvalho and continues to attend quarterly meetings in order to keep abreast of Australian Curriculum developments. Assistance has been sought from Federal Council for ACARA to assess their relationships with rural and remote students and schools along with

investigating how they can improve engagement with rural, regional and remote stakeholders. ACARA is keen to reach out to new groups, identify new communication and engagement channels and show greater diversity in curriculum materials and outgoing communications. The hope is to have better contact and information regarding rural and remote students/families and they are considering a regular update that could be shared with our members or state councils.

ACARA has also sought assistance to encourage parent participation and interaction with the organisation and requested that the Peak Parent Bodies Group, of which ICPA (Aust) is a part, share information with our members. ICPA (Aust) included links to the ACARA website <https://www.acara.edu.au/> for parents to access in the May Branch Bulletin, along with the NAPLAN website which provides information on NAPLAN testing to parents. More recently, ACARA has referred stakeholders to the Australian Curriculum website <https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/> as a useful resource for information on the National Curriculum.

Online NAPLAN continues to be discussed, with most schools seeming to be more comfortable with the transition. A glitch this year saw reports that arrangements had to be made for a number of students in several states to re-sit the exam when there was a problem with the online exams. Federal Council has not been contacted by any members or rural schools indicating that it was a problem for their students, but it is a space we continue to watch. Federal Council encourages members to explore the NAPLAN website <https://www.nap.edu.au/> to assist with understanding the NAPLAN model. We are also interested in hearing any concerns which may arise, especially as NAPLAN Online is rolled out.

A Media Release from the Minister for Education, the Hon Dan Tehan, on 28 June 2018 stated “An independent review has been commissioned to identify the issues with NAPLAN online this year. Just over one million students sat NAPLAN online this year and while 97 per cent of online tests were unaffected it is not good enough that some students and schools were impacted. All education ministers agreed to extend the transition of NAPLAN to online by one year to 2021 pending the findings and recommendations of the independent review.”

In the same statement, the Minister also announced that the Federal Government will be designing a free and voluntary Year One Phonics Check to assist parents and teachers to better understand a child’s reading level early in their education. The suggestion of a Year One Phonics Screening Program has received somewhat divided comment, however Year One Phonics Screening Checks have been reported as successful in the UK since the program began in 2012. The South Australia Department of Education ran a Year One Phonics Check Trial over 56 SA public schools in 2017 and in 2018, over 14,000 South Australian Year 1 students participated in the 2018 Phonics Screening Check. ICPA (Aust) was asked for input as to possible considerations for implementing Year One Phonics Screening for rural and remote students and we will watch this space to ensure that geographically isolated students are also able to adequately participate in beneficial programs.