First Nations education experts respond to mistruths in relation to the Australian Curriculum review



Today, more than 150 Indigenous education experts and practitioners who together represent 2,168.5 years of teaching experience, have issued a statement responding to mistruths in relation to the Australian Curriculum review.

The signatories agree that the proposed changes to the curriculum will assist teachers and educators to make the curriculum more culturally responsive and inclusive.

They are joined by a coalition of 10 education sector peak bodies, who have signed a joint letter to the Minister for Education expressing strong support for the inclusion of First Nations' histories and cultures, and for greater truth-telling in the Australian Curriculum.

"Our goal is to improve the education system to ensure the best possible outcome for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, while at the same time ensuring all students have the opportunity to learn about the unique first cultures of this land," said Dyonne Anderson, President of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Principals' Association.

"Our vision clearly reflects the national vision of ensuring all students learn about the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, and to seeing all young First Nations Australians thrive in their education, as agreed to by Ministers through the 2019 Mparntwe (Alice Springs) Declaration," said Ms Anderson.

"The arguments being made by some education leaders that this review will "Indigenise" the curriculum are utterly false. This is about broadening student's perspectives, not narrowing them," said prep teacher Alinta Iddles-Williams.

"We need to give our students a lot more credit. They are keen to engage with different ways of looking at the world. Even though most of the changes suggested by the review sit in the non-mandatory part of the curriculum, they still suggest ways teachers can use content to support students to understand First Nations perspectives.

"For example, if you are doing work on the seasons children can look at local Indigenous seasons and how they relate to the changes they are seeing in the weather. They might also walk on country with a local elder, which gives them a chance to build relationships, empathy and understanding."

Beresford Dominic, principal of Bwolgcolman Community School on Palm Island highlighted the importance of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cross-curriculum perspective in his school.

"We aim to help our students maintain a strong cultural identity while also developing the skills necessary to participate in the global community.

“Respect, responsibility and safety are at the forefront of everything we do. Ensuring our students have the opportunity to see themselves – their experiences – reflected in the curriculum is a critical element of this work.

“As a nation, we all have a role to play in helping to close the gap. There are clear opportunities through the Australian Curriculum to help ensure First Nations students have the opportunity thrive in their education, and at the same time help ensure all students in Australia have a better understanding of the diverse and unique Aboriginal and Torres Strait cultures,” said Mr Dominic.

“We urge members of the Australian public to support the modest changes proposed by this review and encourage all supporters of the changes to put in a submission to the ACARA curriculum review,” said Ms Anderson.

Authorised by Sally Dennis, General Secretary, The State School Teachers' Union of W.A.
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