

# Human Rights Education in the Australian School Curriculum\*

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**I**N AUSTRALIA a number of initiatives - the *National Consultation on Human Rights* (NHRCCC, 2009) and the *Australian Human Rights Framework* (2010) - have acknowledged the importance of supporting education about human rights in schools. The Framework:

encompasses a comprehensive suite of education initiatives to ensure all Australians are able to access information on human rights. This includes the development of human rights education programs for primary and secondary schools, the community and for the Commonwealth public sector (Commonwealth of Australia, 2010: 7).

In an address to New South Wales (NSW) teachers in 2009, prominent human rights barrister Geoffrey Robertson argued strongly for the importance of human rights education:

.... they [human rights] serve to show that privilege is an anachronism, that dogma is destructive, that freedom is a birthright and discrimination is a wrong that should never be suffered (Robertson, 2009)

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The Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) in its own position paper noted that the goals of human rights education should include the acquisition of knowledge and skills about human rights; the development of respectful attitudes and changed behavior that reflects human rights values; and the motivation of social action and empowerment of active citizenship to advance respect for the rights of all (AHRC, 2010). Given the national and international developments in human rights education, there is an opportunity to meet Australia's international obligations under the *United Nations Declaration of Human Rights Education and Training* to build a culture of rights in our schools as well as in the wider community, engendering respect for individual and collective rights and encouraging collaborations between schools and civic bodies that enhance social cohesion in our neighborhoods.

Now is a timely opportunity to expand our teaching and teacher training efforts to establish human rights education as an integral part of school curriculum programs across the nation. What has been lacking is a comprehensive overview of what is contained in the curriculum in each state and territory and in the available national technologies and materials to support teaching about human rights.

State and Territory and Australian Curriculum documents were analyzed, using a conceptual framework that focused on the extent to which human rights issues and topics were *explicitly* or *implicitly* addressed in these curriculum documents. Qualitative feedback was obtained from key education stakeholders – curriculum bodies, education authorities, teacher associations and community organizations - who participated in roundtable (RT) discussions organized in each state and territory. This analysis provides valuable information on the extent to which Australian schools are engaging with human rights education.

### **Human Rights Education in the School Curriculum**

A feature of Australia's education system is its complexity, involving separate national, state and territory educational systems, each with their own distinct administrative departments and curriculum authorities. The Northern Territory draws on the South Australian syllabus documents for its Senior Secondary Years curriculum.

At the state and territory level three distinct and separate school sectors - Government, Catholic and Independent - operate their own separate

teaching and administrative systems. Nationally across the 9,468 schools, among the 3.5 million students, 66 percent attend Government schools, 20 percent Catholic schools and 14 percent Independent schools (Gonski et al., 2011:3-4).

The role of the Australian Government in schooling has increased over time, taking on a greater funding and overseeing role, including in the curriculum. In 2009, the Australian Government provided an average of 15 percent of the Recurrent funding to Government schools, 57 percent to Catholic schools, and 33 percent to Independent schools. Of Capital funding the Australian Government provided 46 percent of the funding to Government schools, 49 percent to Catholic schools and 34 percent to Independent Schools (Gonski et al., 2011:15-16).

### **Curriculum - National agreement**

The Australian Government has also taken the lead on standardizing the curriculum, with its Australian Curriculum initiative. Through a national education ministerial forum, the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA), the Australian Government gained the agreement of all states and territories to develop a nationally agreed Australian Curriculum across eight main learning areas, as agreed in the Melbourne Declaration in 2008 (MCEETYA, 2008:13). Note that from 2012 MCEETYA was known as the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood (SCSEEC).

### **Australian School Curriculum**

As mentioned earlier this study has been undertaken at an important transitional time when all states and territories are involved with the Australian Government in a staged process of developing and implementing a common national Australian Curriculum. At the start of 2013 some key Subjects had been fully developed and implemented, with a number of Foundation to Year 10 Subjects in place. They included the Stage 1 subjects English, History, Mathematics, and Science that had been developed by Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) and endorsed, with agreements in place for their implementation across all states and territories by the end of 2013.

The senior secondary curriculum for each of these four Subjects for Years 11 and 12 has been endorsed, and Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) has been working with the states and territories to integrate the content and agree on a timeline for their implementation (ACARA 2013). However no Stage 1 Senior Years 11 and 12 subjects had been implemented and so separate state and territory subject curriculums remained in place.

### General Capabilities statements

Part of the development of the Australian Curriculum included a set of agreed General Capabilities statements that were to be applied in the drafting of the curriculum for all Learning Areas/ Subjects. They included a specific focus on students learning about:

- Literacy, numeracy, Information, Communication Technology (ICT), critical and creative thinking, personal and social, *ethical understanding* and *intercultural understanding*.
- Although there was no specific statement related to human rights, the term was *explicitly* mentioned in the statement referring to *Ethical understanding* and human rights were *implicit* in the *Intercultural understanding* statement:
  - ◊ *Ethical understanding* – takes account of values, human rights and responsibilities, animal rights, and global justice, and mentions the first three as an organizing element.
  - ◊ *Intercultural understanding* - includes opportunities implicitly in the study of different cultural perceptions and practice and explicitly in the element of Recognizing culture and developing respect, and Reflecting on intercultural experiences and taking responsibility.

### *Cross-Curriculum priorities*

The Australian Curriculum also outlined three cross-curriculum priorities related to what it called important issues in contemporary society that would help equip young Australians with skills, knowledge and understanding to engage in a globalized world and they are to be embedded across all learning areas (ACARA 2011). These cross-curriculum priorities are:

- *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures;*

- *Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia*; and
- *Sustainability*.

According to a number of roundtable participants the first two priorities were important - *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures*, and *Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia*. Neither priority contained an *explicit* mention of human rights, but both did have some *implicit* opportunities for addressing a number of specific human rights issues. The *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures* priority, in its second key concept, highlighted examining experiences through “historical, social and political lenses.” The *Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia* priority mentions study of the “social, cultural, political and economic links with Asia.”

### **Learning About which Human Rights?**

An important aspect in identifying curriculum opportunities is to consider which human rights students should be learning about across their school years. The starting point needs to be consideration of the United Nations' *Universal Declaration on Human Rights* (1948) and subsequent United Nations human rights conventions and treaties and recent Australian human rights legislation. This suggests a focus on a set of specific human rights issues related to both individual and group rights that have been historically at the center of human rights discussions as well as newer contemporary and emerging issues. Drawing on the Victorian Charter and the Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS) document they could include:

- civil and political rights - rights to life, liberty, free speech, movement, political thought, religious practice, a fair trial, privacy, the right to found a family, to vote;
- economic, social and cultural rights - such rights to adequate food and water, health care, education, a clean environment, respect for cultural practices, welfare assistance;
- humanitarian rights - rights of those who are involved in, or affected by, armed conflict; the treatment of prisoners of war; of the wounded, sick or shipwrecked; of civilians; and of women and children in particular;

- various group rights - the rights of workers, women, children, minority groups, refugees, Indigenous peoples, people with a disability (VELS, 2009).

These set of rights are a starting point only. A curriculum paper would need to be drafted as a result of Australia wide - state and territory – roundtable discussions involving curriculum authorities, teacher associations, and community and non-governmental organization (NGO) representatives to help set out which specific set of rights would be addressed across each of the key school Learning Stages and apply to which subject Learning Areas.

### Key Curriculum Dimensions

Given this set of human rights issues, it is important to analyze the extent of the school curriculum opportunities for students to learn about these issues. In doing so there are a number of key curriculum dimensions that also need to be considered. They include:

- Stages of learning – which school years, from Foundation/ Kindergarten to Year 12
- Explicit or implicit topics - are human rights issues named *explicitly* and can they be specifically identified in the curriculum or are they *implicit* opportunities, where human rights issues can be implied from the curriculum documents?
- Compulsory or optional - are topics mandatory/compulsory or optional, and are they available as a subject elective?
- Curricular or other learning opportunities (extra-curricular) – while the primary focus of this study is on the curricular aspects (what the curriculum documents reveal), what are the important learnings taking place through other kinds of learning opportunities that may be subject and curriculum related or may be extra-curricular learning activities?
- School sector variations - what are the variations in subject offerings across school sectors (a few were highlighted in a number of Roundtable discussions)?

### Curriculum Opportunities in School Learning Stages

This part of our analysis considered the opportunities available in the curriculum by school years. The analysis drew on state and territory round-

table discussions and relevant curriculum and syllabus documents and was greatly assisted by a few key staff from NSW, Victorian and South Australian curriculum authorities.

The opportunities noted have been categorized as:

- either explicit or implicit.
- by Subject and/or School Year/Unit.
- human rights issue/topic.
- the State or Territory where they are offered.

The rights issues or topics listed below were mandatory, except where a topic was optional or part of an elective and in that case we have noted the entry with an (E). While many states and territories are moving to an F-10 and 11-12 year syllabus grouping, in line with Australian Curriculum documents, this analysis has focused on the following *three* school learning stages:

- Senior Secondary - Years 11 and 12.
- Secondary - Years 7 to 10.
- Primary - Years F/K to 6.

### **Senior Secondary (Years 11 and 12)**

#### **Explicit**

The Senior Secondary Subjects that *explicitly* addressed human rights issues in almost all states and territories were: *History*; *Geography* and *Legal Studies*. A Senior Years 11 and 12 *Civics and Citizenship* Australian Curriculum unit that will be optional is still in development and it is not clear how each state and territory will implement the unit for the study of civic and citizenship rights.

Table 1. Senior Years 11-12 Explicit topics

Subject	Year / Unit	HR Topic / issue	State/Territory
<b>History</b> <b>Modern World History</b> <b>Modern History</b>	Year 12 Year 11 Options Unit 2 Unit 1 (E) Unit 2 (E) Years 11/12	Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Apartheid, Refugees (SIVEX) Civil rights. National Studies & International Studies in Peace & Conflict topics. Oppression and struggle for human rights, slave trade, suffragette movement, US civil rights movement, struggle for Indigenous rights, Burma, Tibet, Tiananmen Square. Experiences of Indigenous people, Ideas of race, Changes in values. Forced & free migration, Slaves & forced labor. History of women, Power & powerlessness-rights and freedom of oppressed. Civil rights; Apartheid; Suffragist struggle; 2nd wave of feminism.	Victoria, NSW Tasmania, South Australia/ Northern Territory (SA/NT) Australian Capital Territory (ACT), Western Australia (WA), Queensland (QLD)
<b>Geography</b>	Unit 1 Unit 2	Movement of people, Issues for geographers. Migration of people, Case study – water. Globalization - movement of refugees (E), global phenomena and evaluation of responses.	SA/NT Tasmania, Victoria
<b>Legal Studies</b>	Unit 6 Year 11 Unit 2 Year 12 Units 3,4	Human rights - nature & development of human rights, Promoting & enforcing human rights, Contemporary issue. (Core Part 2-20% of NSW course). Case studies – Australian rights issue – e.g. Mabo, gay rights. International law –Treaties, Commonwealth powers. Young people & the law- rights of young people, child (E).	NSW Victoria, SA/NT Tasmania, ACT, QLD
<b>Civics &amp; Citizenship</b>	Years 11 & 12 (20 hr. unit)	Civic and political rights.	NSW

There was a further set of subjects that had relatively small enrolments and were not offered widely or were available in only one or a few states and territories:

- *Politics - Australian & Global Politics* (Victoria); *Australian & International Politics* (SA/NT); *Politics & the Law* (WA).



- Society and Culture – *Sociology* (Victoria, Tasmania, ACT); *Society & Culture* (NSW, SA/NT); *Study of Society* (QLD).
- *Aboriginal Studies*; *Women's Studies*; and *Religion or Religious Studies*; *Philosophy*.

**Table 2. Senior Years 11-12 Explicit topics - Smaller Enrolments**

Subject	Year/Unit	HR Topic / issue	State/Territory
<b>Australian &amp; Global Politics</b>	Year 12 Units 1 to 4	Respect for human rights, rights of child, refugees, gay rights, feminism, Indigenous rights, Democratic rights and freedoms. Individual & minority rights, Australian Bill or Charter of Rights, Human rights organizations, Global issues – human rights, people's movement.	Victoria ONLY
<b>Australian &amp; International Politics</b>	Year 11 Year 12 (E)	Power, Community Politics, Government. Australian Constitution, Voting, Parties. International: UN & Human rights; UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People.	SA/ NT
<b>Politics &amp; the Law</b>	Unit 1 Unit 3	Civil and political rights, Rights and governance, Types of rights - civil, political, economic, social, cultural, Protection of human rights - covenants, treaties.	WA ONLY For 2012
<b>Sociology</b>	Year 11-12 Units 1-4	Ethnicity, Indigenous – Inequality, age, gender, ethnicity. Indigenous culture. Social movements and social change.	Victoria Tasmania, ACT
<b>Society and Culture</b>	Year 11 Year 12 Year 12	Power & authority, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) societies, Refugee & migrant experiences, Australia as global citizens. Global issues – A question of rights. Equality & difference - human rights, discrimination, race.	SA/NT NSW
<b>Study of Society</b>	Year 11/12	Examining inequality.	Queensland
<b>Aboriginal Studies</b>	HSC-Part 1 Part 2	Social Justice & Human rights issues: Global understanding of human rights & social justice. Land rights movement.	NSW
<b>Aboriginal Studies</b>	Year 12	Aboriginal land rights – land & sea rights. Citizenship – Struggle for rights, UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Rights of Indigenous people in a global context.	SA/NT

<b>Women's Studies</b>	Year 12 Topic 4 (E)	Women & the law – women's human rights.	SA/NT
<b>Religious Studies Religion Studies Religion and society</b>	Year 12 Year 11 Year 11 Unit 2	Religion & belief system/Religion & non-religion. Work- rights, impact on social justice & human rights. Ethical or social justice issue (E). Ethics and morality.	NSW SA/NT Victoria
<b>*Philosophy</b>	Year 12 Unit 2	Ethical problems and political philosophy.	Victoria

\* Note: Unit 2 of the course replaced in 2013 by 'On foundations of morality' & 'On rights and justice'.

## Implicit

There were a number of Senior Years Subjects where there were *implicit* opportunities for students to learn about human rights issues. They included: *English*; *Science*; and *Economics & Business Management*. Of these *English* was the most significant as it remains the subject across Senior and Secondary Stages of Learning with by far the largest numbers of student enrolments.

*English*: The *English* curriculum did not *explicitly* include a discussion of any human rights issues, but rights could be addressed through the texts that students chose for study. For example in NSW the High School Certificate (HSC) English course texts were prescribed for Year 12 Stage 6 only and not for Year 11. Among these texts students are encouraged to read widely and can choose various electives and related texts drawn from fiction, drama, poetry, nonfiction film, media or multimedia. For example texts like the film *Ten Canoes* or the novel *Swallow the Air* could be related to Indigenous rights. Further in one elective Module C - *Texts and Society - Global Village* and *Into the World* Electives there were opportunities for students to learn about specific human rights issues, depending on the texts chosen. Also depending on which Area of Study, such as *Belonging* nominated for study in 2009-2014 Electives by all students, there was “the potential to explore human rights issues” (Board of Studies NSW).

*Science*: The *Science* curriculum did not name any specific human rights issues. One topic, such as *Water for Living* or *Humans at Work* in the NSW HSC syllabus students could explore current issues and implications for society. One roundtable participant felt that the new Australian Science curriculum offered one strand focusing on “Science as a human endeavor [and]

it actually looks at social and political and economic connections to science” (ACT RT).

*Economics and Business Management:* The *Economics* curriculum did not mention human rights, but a number of topics such as *Government in the Economy* in the NSW Preliminary Course and each of the four topics in their HSC course could provide opportunities. The SA/NT Stage 1 Economics Syllabus mentioned “economic, social and political rights in industrial relations” as part of its capability statement, but did not specify them further in the content. Implied rights issues featured in *Globalisation and Poverty and Inequality* topics (Stage 1) and key areas (Stage 2).

*Economics* in Victoria did have a “part of the curriculum [that] refers to income distribution, questions of equity, resource allocation with that migration of population” and in Business management they cover the issue of corporate social responsibility - especially for big business in Year 12 (Victorian RT).

**Table 3. Senior Years 11-12 Implicit topics**

Subject	Year/Unit	HR topic/issue	State/Territory
English	Years 11 & 12	Texts and society.	NSW, Victoria, SA/NT, QLD, ACT, WA, Tasmania
Science	Years 11 & 12	Water for living, Humans at work. Science as a human endeavor.	NSW, ACT
Economics Business Management	Year 12 Year 12 Year 11 Year 11 Year 12	Government in the Economy. Globalization. Poverty & inequality. Poverty & inequality. Economic choices and consequences and Economic change: issues and challenges. Economic activity, economic management, Corporate social responsibility.	NSW SA/NT SA/NT Victoria Victoria

## Numbers Studying Subjects in Year 12

It is important to determine how many students are able to take up particular Subject opportunities. Yet the available data on the numbers of students studying across each state and territory, by each Subject, and Stage of learn-

ing is limited. It has been possible to draw on an Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) study (Wilkinson & Milgate, 2009) that compiled Year 12 study data for a few key subjects, *English, History, Geography*, and a number of *Other state specific subjects*, as well showing the total number of Year 12 students. While only partial, the data does provide a useful indication of the relative opportunities available for students of the Subjects we have reported on in this section, particularly the percentages.

**Table 4. Student numbers studying selected Subjects & Year 12 total (2007)**

	NSW	Victoria	Queensland	WA	Tasmania	SA	NT	ACT
English	59,621	40,735	34,262	9,108	2,105	9,044	916	3,746
History	9,769 Modern 2,278 Extension	4,543 Revolution 1,304 Australian	5,121	2,758	495 Modern	1,594 Modern 205 Australian	83 Modern 26 Australian	629
Geography	4,561	2,416	4,364	2,973	208	1,223	80	164
Other		1,765 Int'l Studies 591 National Politics				123 Aust & Int Politics	33 Aust & Int Politics	
Total Year 12 students	67,189	47,069	41,599	11,765	4,947	12,056	985	3,998

## Secondary (Years 7 to 10)

### Explicit

During the Secondary Years 7 to 10 our analysis showed that Years 9 and 10 offered a set of *explicit* opportunities for students to study a range of human rights issues. The main Subjects and unit were: *History; Geography; Aboriginal Studies*; and the *Civics and Citizenship* unit. It is worth noting here that *Civics and Citizenship* is a key human rights Learning Area across Years 3 to 10 that does include *explicit* study of civic and political rights as part of a mandatory twenty hour learning unit.

*History:* The *History* Syllabus in NSW for Year 10 covered such topics as Rights and freedoms, human rights and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Australia's civil rights, Aboriginal rights including the citizenship rights referendum 1967, the Stolen generations, and Decolonisation. Also in Year 9 there were topics dealing with the Movements of people, Slavery, and Progressive ideas and movements addressing democratic rights.

*Geography:* The *Geography* Syllabus Year 10 in NSW had as one of its mandatory focus area – *Australia and its Regional and Global Contexts* – which specifically included a topic on Human rights and Reconciliation. There was also a set of important electives. *Oceanography* included a focus on Indigenous rights to the oceans. *Development Geography* looked at patterns of global inequality including optional development issues of political and human rights, refugees, role and status of women. *Global Change* also covered fundamental human rights to food, shelter, water, clean air, health, education, global human inequalities, and how citizenship protects fundamental human rights. *Political Geography* included topics referring to social justice, and humanitarian aid.

In Year 9 the *Global Change* included Globalization, Global inequalities and Global organizations topics. Global inequalities specifically referred to extremes of poverty & wealth, variations in access to education, food, health, shelter and water. The *Global Geographical Issues* area had optional issues of study that included human rights, Indigenous people and self determination topics. There was also a *Geography Life Skills* course that included topics such as Global Change covering the Fundamental human rights to food, shelter, water, clean air, health, education; and Global human inequalities; and How citizenship protects fundamental human rights.

*Civics and Citizenship:* The *Civics and Citizenship* unit in Year 10 included important topics on the United Nations and Australia as a Global Citizen where various human rights issues were addressed. The Community Engagement topic included a study of rights “where students look at United Nations and the United Nations agreements and Australia as a global citizen, so that brings in the consideration of ethical global issues that are very much human rights related” (Victoria RT). Although the major focus of *Civics and Citizenship* was on civic rights, it was still seen as a vital unit for all students. One roundtable participant said that “one of the key areas would be in the Civics and Citizenship type subject. I think that basically should be com-

pulsory for all students... I think it's so important for young people to learn about their rights and the responsibilities within our society." (ACT RT).

**Table 5. Secondary Years 9 and 10 Explicit topics**

Subject	Year / Unit	HR Topic / Issue	State/Territory
History- Aboriginal & Indigenous History – Civics & Citizenship (C&C) History-Difference & diversity History- Gender History – Civics & Citizenship (C&C)	Year 10 Year 10 Year 10 Year 9	Struggle for Rights & Freedom - Terra nullius, Land rights, Native title. Changing rights & freedom of groups, Active & informed citizens. Crime punishment, slaves, women (E). Struggle for rights & freedom of marginalized groups. Gender discrimination, Rights & freedom of women in 20th century Australia. Cultures of people - rights & responsibilities.	NSW NSW
History	Year 10 Year 9	Rights & freedom- UN human rights declaration, & Australia's role, civil rights. Aboriginal rights, US civil rights movement. Movement of people: Slavery, Progressive ideas: democratic rights, UN Declaration on Rights of Indigenous People. Globalised world: Migration: refugees. Australia & Asia: Making a nation: women's rights. Making a better world: movement of people (E).	Victoria, SA ACT, WA, NT
Geography	Year 10 (E) Elective Year 9 Years 9 & 10	Australia and its Regional & Global Contexts: Human rights & reconciliation. Oceanography: Indigenous rights. Development. Geography: Patterns of global inequality, political & human rights, refugees, role and status of women. Political Geography: social justice, humanitarian aid. Life Skills course: Global Change: Fundamental human rights to: food, shelter, water, clean air, health, education, Global human inequalities, How citizenship protects fundamental human rights. Global Change: Globalization, Global inequalities, Global organizations. Global Geographical Issues: human rights, Indigenous people and self determination. Development Geography: development issues & formulation and evaluation of policies.	NSW Victoria
Civics & Citizenship - Community Engagement	Year 10	United Nations agreements, Australia as a global citizen.	Victoria, NSW, SA, Tasmania ACT, WA

We need to mention two further Subjects or units of study: *Aboriginal Studies*; and the *Personal Learning Plan*.

*Aboriginal Studies*: In Years 7 to 10 in NSW the Aboriginal Studies Syllabus had an elective that focused on students gaining knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal people and includes among the Course Options a topic - Aboriginal Interaction with Legal and Political Systems - where students learn about key Australian institutions impacting on the rights and freedoms of Aboriginal people.

*Personal Learning Plans (PLP)*: There was also one standalone unit in both the South Australian and Northern Territory Curriculum - *Personal Learning Plans (PLP)* - that was compulsory for all students and was normally studied in Year 10. The syllabus contained one topic – Work skills – with a specific focus on the rights and obligations of workers (SA & NT RT).

## Implicit

Roundtable participants and curriculum specialists helped by making suggestions about the existence of *implicit* opportunities available in following Subjects – *English; Science; Economics*.

*English*: The *English Years 7-10* curriculum did provide a range of *implicit* opportunities to link the study of texts that could be potentially related to human rights issues. In the NSW and Victorian English Syllabus there were *implicit* opportunities to address rights issues through the choice among the Suggested texts in NSW and VELS Syllabus in Victoria (NSW, Victoria RT). The newly developed English K-10 curriculum did include texts that related to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, intercultural and migrant experiences, insights into peoples and countries of Asia that could be potentially related to rights issues (Board of Studies NSW, Victorian Curriculum Assessment Authority).

*Science*: The *Science Years 7-10 Syllabus* in NSW included three areas among its Prescribed Focus Areas – *Applications and uses of science; Implications for society and the environment; and Current issues, research and development* - where there was potential to study human rights issues (NSW). One roundtable participant felt the new Australian Curriculum “provides a positive opportunity for the integration of issues relating to human rights...science as a human endeavour and the relationship between science and society ... provide openings” (ACT RT).

*Economics*: The *Economics* course in Years 9 and 10 in Victoria addressed Consumerism and ethical consumption and this was considered to be a big rights issue (Victoria RT).

**Table 6. Secondary Years 7 - 10 Implicit topics**

Subject	Year / Unit	HR Topic/Issue	State/Territory
English	Year 10 Year 9	Aboriginal and multicultural experiences in Australia. Aboriginal Australians in texts.	NSW ACT
Science	Years 9 & 10	Applications and uses of science, Implications for society and the environment, Current issues, research and development. Science as human endeavor, Science & society.	NSW ACT
Economics	Levels 9 & 10	Consumerism – ethical consumerism and the ways values.	Victoria

### Primary (Years F/K to 6)

A feature of the debate about the place of human rights education in the school curriculum has been the call to include teaching about human rights from the early school years – i.e. from Foundation/Kindergarten through to Year 6 (AHRC 2011; 2010).

A number of participants at the roundtable discussions said that human rights education needed to start in the early school years, as they saw it as a ‘life long process’ (Victoria, Tasmania RT). Roundtable discussions also suggested that during Years K to 4 rights issues were not explicitly named or addressed in any subject areas across this stage, and there were more *implicit* opportunities in Subjects in Years 5 to 6.

A number of participants also highlighted the need for students to be introduced specifically to the issue of *child rights*, during these years and for child rights to feature as the main human rights issue that students learned about during their Primary school years.

There were a number of Subjects that *implicitly* addressed human rights issues in the Primary school years. As a Learning Area – *Human Society and Its Environment* – was identified as the main one to focus on. Within this area the Subjects considered relevant were: *History; Geography; Civics*



and *Citizenship*; and *PDHPE* [Personal Development, Health and Physical Education]:

- *History*: Aboriginal culture & histories from Year 3 to 6 (NSW, ACT); Year 5 Colonial history – Eureka Stockade (Victoria).
- *Geography*: the Social Systems and Structures area – in Stage 2 investigate rights, responsibilities in school & community - and Stage 3 includes rights and responsibilities within social systems and structures (NSW).
- *Civics and Citizenship* (Years 3 to 6).
- *Physical Development, Health and Physical Education (PDHPE) K- 6*: respecting diversity (Victoria), human sexuality, and values (NSW).

As mentioned above, a feature of the new Australian curriculum was that the *English* (F/K- 6) years curriculum also provided *implicit* opportunities, as a result of the General Capability statements and the recommended texts to support the teaching. The study of particular texts could involve a focus on a specific human rights issue, but these opportunities were never *explicitly* stated as human rights issues in any of the curriculum, syllabus or support documents.

## Catholic and Independent schools

### Catholic Schools - Social Justice and Social Responsibility

A feature of the Catholic Education system was its focus on aspects of Social Justice and Social Responsibility. Roundtable participants highlighted the fact that the ways in which each state and diocese across each state and territory applied these principles varied considerably and it was difficult to generalize. Therefore we have only been able to highlight a few examples that we were made aware during this study.

In NSW in 2002 the Catholic Education Commission issued a *Social Responsibility* document – one for Years K-6 and another for Years 7 to 12 - that was described as a resource to assist schools to promote a sense of social responsibility. In Years K-6 among the four main themes set out was one focusing specifically on *Rights and Responsibilities* and it suggested these issues could be explored in English, Human Society and its Environment (HSIE), and PDHPE subjects.

In Years 7 to 10 *Rights and Responsibilities* also applied to English, Geography, History, Commerce, Studies in Society, Community and Family

Studies and PDHPE subjects. In Years 11 and 12 they were suggested as relevant to English, Legal Studies, Society and Culture, and PDHPE.

Significantly, neither document specified particular human rights issues that could or should be addressed. This meant that it remained up to individual teachers and schools to see how and what social responsibility or social justice rights issues should be addressed.

### **Social Justice – Community Projects**

Women’s refuge - In the ACT one participant suggested that “social justice was very well developed in Catholic high schools.” One example of the kind of Community Projects that students had taken part in over a number of years was visiting a women’s refuge for young women. The practical involvement helped raise a range of issues and made a real impact “Like, they don’t just take the money there. They actually work there and see how it operates. It’s quite powerful” (ACT RT).

### **Restorative justice**

A further example was the way one Catholic primary school in the ACT had involved its students in a restorative justice project. The project had served as a “really powerful tool for talking to students about human rights” (ACT RT).

### **Catholic Social Justice agencies**

Another important feature of Catholic schools was their ability to engage in social justice activities through a number of Catholic organizations in each state, linking students to the work of Catholic agencies such as Caritas and the St Vincent de Paul Society (WA RT).

### **Studies of Religion**

A feature of most non-government schools (both Catholic and Independent) was that they required students to study religion, as a result a subject like *Studies of Religion* was seen as important. It provided “a number of opportunities where human rights could be embedded in some of the key topics, such as, religion, state relations, ethics and spirit learning” (QLD RT).

### **Impact of Human Rights Legislation**

An important development at both a state and territory level has been the passing of the ACT *Bill of Rights* (2004), and the Victoria’s *Charter of Human*

*Rights* (2007). Importantly both pieces of legislation have outlined a set of human rights that now have statutory protection in their state or territory. Unfortunately to date there appears to have been little impact of the legislation on their respective school sectors or on student learning, with most of the rights education efforts taking place across the public sector or the wider community.

### **ACT Bill of Rights (2004)**

The importance of the ACT *Bill of Rights* (2004) was noted by ACT roundtable participants and they felt that passing the legislation had helped to raise the profile of human rights in schools. However no specific ACT curriculum initiatives were mentioned. Instead it was suggested that students needed to have human rights issues integrated formally into the school curriculum, together with informal opportunities for students to engage with human rights issues while they attended school (ACT RT).

### **Victorian Charter of Human Rights (2007)**

There was strong state government support for the role of education about the *Charter of Human Rights* during the period 2008 to 2011 (Victoria RT). However few resources have been devoted to educating teachers and students about the rights covered by the Charter and bringing about changes to the Victorian school curriculum: "After the Victorian Charter was passed there was significant activity within government, including training of public servants, training school leavers, ensuring that the Victorian Charter was taken account of in school policy documents and the like" (VEOC Interview).

One roundtable participant and a representative from the Victorian Curriculum Assessment Authority suggested there were a few places in Victoria's Australian Curriculum syllabus documents that are located under the *Victorian Essential Learning Standards (AusVELS) F to 10 Curriculum*. The documents had specific references to the rights set out under the Charter. As part of its Teacher Support documents, the *Human Rights in the Victorian Essential Learning Standards* section refers to the Victorian Charter, a set of key human rights to address and provides examples of elements across a few selected subjects across school Levels 1 to 6. Significantly, rights feature most specifically at the higher levels, in Levels 4, 5 and 6, and across the *Civics and Citizenship* units.

## Other Learning Opportunities

Although the main focus of this study is on the opportunities available in the School Curriculum, participants at the roundtable discussions also highlighted a range of other important learning opportunities that were occurring in schools. These opportunities were not specifically mentioned in any curriculum or syllabus documents, but arose out of individual school, teacher or student interest and often involved school involvement with their local community and various community-based organizations. This part of the analysis has been assisted greatly by the presence of representatives from a range of NGOs at the roundtable discussions. Their input, together with a search of their websites has helped outline some of these opportunities. We have classified the activities noted into the following categories:

- Community-school initiatives;
- Special events and festivals;
- School excursions and camps.

## Community-School Initiatives - Projects, Programs, Campaigns

A number of government human rights agencies such as the AHRC and NGOs play an important role in schools, helping to raise awareness of rights issues and assisting students and teachers to take action on specific human rights issues.

The work of a number of prominent NGOs is important because they do provide opportunities to address a range of rights issues. Here we have categorized the main activities of the NGOs we have become aware of as being:

- Broadly based rights;
- Civil, political, humanitarian rights and/or Refugee rights;
- Children's rights;
- Economic rights;
- Humanitarian rights;
- Indigenous rights.

Within these categories the human rights issues that have the highest profile in schools relate to - Indigenous rights, asylum seekers and refugees, famine, poverty, the rights of children, and prisoners of conscience and tor-

ture. In most cases these issues are addressed through NGOs being invited into a school for a class presentation or workshop to talk about their projects or campaigns, or raise awareness about specific rights issues. In a number of cases longer term projects or schools groups have been established, involving students and staff over a longer period. Among the most active and involved NGOs working with schools in various states and territories are:

Broadly based rights

- UN Youth Australia

Civil, Political, Humanitarian rights and/or Refugee rights

- Amnesty International Australia
- Asylum Seeker Resource Centre (Melbourne)

Child rights

- Save the Children Australia

Economic rights

- Global Education Project (AUS AID)
- World Vision
- Oxfam Australia
- Caritas

Humanitarian rights

- Red Cross Australia
- CARE Australia
- Engineers Without Borders (Victoria, ACT)

Indigenous rights

- Reconciliation Australia
- ANTaR
- Fred Hollows Foundation.

Information gained from roundtable discussions and website searches has helped in outlining below some of the human rights activities being carried out by these NGOs that are specifically relevant to schools, teachers and students.

## Broadly based rights

### *UN Youth Australia*

UN Youth Australia is a national youth led charity focusing on students aged 15 to 19 years. The program aims to educate Years 10-12 students about the UN and international relations, inspire them to take action on rights issues about which they are passionate and equip them with the skills they need to take effective actions. They organize the Australian Youth Forum, nominate each year an Australian Youth Representative to attend the UN General Assembly, hold a National Youth Conference and the Evatt Competition (a national Model UN debating competition for students in Years 9 to 12 which runs in all states and territories).

## Civil, Political, Humanitarian rights and/or Refugees

### *Amnesty International Australia*

Amnesty International began in the UK in the 1960s focusing on the plight of prisoners of conscience around the world. Among its current campaigns in Australia are those on refugees' human rights, Indigenous People's rights, Individuals at risk of detention and torture, violence against women, ending the death penalty, and ending the Arms Trade. With offices in most states, mostly run by volunteers, part of its work focuses on involving young people and working with schools. For example in NSW it visits almost twenty-five secondary schools each year giving talks or presentations on specific human rights issues. Almost sixty secondary schools have students attend Amnesty's annual schools conference (NSW RT).

In Victoria Amnesty International's Schools Network operates mainly in Independent and Catholic schools involving few government schools. Although a recent ban on Amnesty International by Catholic schools in Victoria over its (Amnesty International's) stand on abortion rights has limited its work with Catholic school students in Victoria (Victoria RT).

Amnesty International offices in smaller states like South Australia, Tasmania and Western Australia are less able to work directly with schools, due to a smaller level of staffing and volunteer pool (Amnesty International).

### *Asylum Seeker Resource Centre (Melbourne)*

The Asylum Seeker Resource Centre (ASRC) in Melbourne focuses on the rights issues of asylum seekers and refugees and responds to requests

from a school or a teacher to visit their school and give a presentation about the issues associated with asylum seekers. Most requests come from independent secondary schools.

The presentations generally last from one to one and half hours and while most of the students are in secondary school, there have also been visits to primary schools – classes upwards from Year 3. Generally the ASRC receives requests from Civics & Citizenship and History classes, as well as some English classes that are studying texts such as *The Rugmaker of Mazar-e-sharif* in Year 11 or 12 (Victoria RT).

### Child rights

#### *Save the Children Australia*

Save the Children Australia is a “leading independent emergency relief and development organisation for children” that also works internationally in over one hundred twenty countries. A major part of its work is on child rights. Led by its Victorian office Save the Children has been working to ensure school students learn about child rights and human rights from their early school years, by trying to embed a study of child rights issues into all school learning. The main Save the Children office in Melbourne office does not have a person dedicated to working with schools, although staff in both NSW and South Australia do have a role in working directly with schools (Save the Children).

The South Australian office of Save the Children has led a number of school initiatives, such as the *Speaking Out* program exploring child rights, child labor, and child soldiers; the *Global Peace* program for secondary schools, taking a whole-schools approach to peace. Their most recent program is a child rights education resource *Finding My Magic*, released in 2011 that targeted K-6 primary school children. In South Australia Save the Children distributed almost a thousand copies of the DVD and print resource to SA schools during Children’s Week (SA RT).

### Economic rights

#### *Global Education project (AUSAID)*

The Global Education project (GE) is funded by the Australian Government’s Australian Agency for International Development (AUSAID) and works with the support of Education Services Australia. Centers in the

major states work to address a range of global development issues such as food security, water security, and the rights for women. Their materials and programs do help address human rights issues in *History* and *Geography* subjects (SA RT). The project provides school teachers with a range of resources to address global issues and the emerging field of global education across the school curriculum. Most of its activities are focused on teacher professional development and providing teaching resources.

The Global Education Centre in South Australia focuses on assisting teachers to address development issues, by developing teaching resources, organizing seminars and teacher professional learning sessions, generally for one hour after school, whole days at school or through annual teacher association conferences, English and History (SA RT). According to the Centre about two thousand South Australian teachers take part in their sessions each year. Human rights and social justice are covered as one of five main areas addressed by GE centers. Among a number of school case studies, one that focused on human rights was a Year 5/6 class at Beachlands Primary School in Western Australia (Global Education).

### *World Vision*

World Vision is a Christian voluntary organization working to improve “the lives of disadvantaged and at-risk children and communities” through Child Sponsorships, the *40 Hour Famine*, other campaigns and advocacy and its *Global Leadership Convention*. Students and young people are encouraged from an early age to make a commitment to financially sponsor a child in a developing country to help meet their basic needs.

The *40 Hour Famine* organized each year by World Vision in each Australian state and territory was mentioned as an exemplar for involving school students in actively learning about a human rights issue such as hunger (ACT page 12). In NSW more than five hundred fifty schools, mostly secondary schools, are involved each year in the *40 Hour Famine*. The *Global Leadership Convention* involves students in Years 10 to 12 in an annual event held in six states and territories focusing on specific issues like child labor in India and developing and inspiring students to work for justice in the world. World Vision also involves young people aged 15 to 25 years through its *VGen* youth movement that works actively against social injustice and poverty. A few *VGen* groups have been set up in NSW schools. Young people and students have also taken up ongoing rights issues through recent World



Vision campaigns such as *Don't Trade Lives* - a campaign against human trafficking and slavery or *Child Health Now* - a campaign to reduce child and maternal mortality (World Vision).

#### *Oxfam Australia*

Oxfam Australia has been working to fight poverty and injustice through campaigns and responding to emergencies in third world/developing countries around the world for more than fifty years. Based in Melbourne, it has offices in NSW, Queensland, South Australia and Western Australia. Among its current campaigns are those focused on addressing poverty (*Make Poverty History*), addressing famine and hunger, growing food sustainably, climate change, fair trade (*GROW, Climate Change, Make Trade Fair*), Indigenous health (*Closing the Gap*). The *3 things Oxfam youth movement* “offers opportunities for secondary students to think and behave as ethical global citizens,” engaging young people to ask questions, support actions, and spread the word among their peers. It also organizes the annual *Walk Against Want* that attracts many secondary and primary school students, and Oxfam’s *International Youth Partnerships*. Oxfam also provides a number of education resources for teachers to involve students in Oxfam projects (Oxfam).

#### *Caritas Australia*

Caritas Australia is the Catholic Church’s international aid and development organization that works in over thirty developing countries. Grounded in the Catholic Social Justice Teaching tradition it supports long-term development programs in impoverished communities in Africa, Asia, East Timor, the Pacific, Latin America and Australian Indigenous communities. Among Caritas’ school resources are curriculum and topic specific resources for primary and secondary schools, including for its annual fund raising and community engagement project - *Project Compassion* (Caritas).

### **Humanitarian rights**

#### *Red Cross Australia*

Red Cross Australia, which celebrates its centenary in Australia in 2014, and says it is the largest humanitarian organization in the world. Red Cross works as an impartial, neutral and independent charity helping out

in natural disasters, crises and emergencies, acting to uphold the Geneva Conventions or 'rules of war', collects blood through its Blood Service, and trains and provides first aid. The only program aimed at young people is the Red Cross Young Humanitarian group where young people can join on Facebook and participate through donations, volunteering, or getting involved in their national youth leadership networks (Red Cross).

#### *CARE Australia*

CARE Australia is an Australian non-denominational charity, part of a network of twelve national CARE organizations providing humanitarian aid, emergency relief, development assistance and fighting poverty. Among its long-term projects are helping families produce food, improve health of communities especially mothers and children, clean water, sanitation and environmental health. A special focus is on women's empowerment – educating women and helping women out of poverty. One of its fundraisers is the *Walk in Her Shoes* Challenge (CARE Australia). It provides CARE speakers for talks in schools focusing on aspects of global poverty and CARE Australia's *Global Poverty: Teacher's Toolkit* is a resource to help teach students about poverty, through case studies and planned lesson activities (Care Australia).

#### *Engineers Without Borders Australia*

Engineers Without Borders Australia (EWB) is a not-for-profit organization focused on involving young people in practical hands-on actions bringing about change through "humanitarian" engineering. Based in Melbourne Engineers Without Borders operates a *High Schools Outreach* Program where its members, mostly in major capital cities, lead a science education program for secondary school students. The focus is on addressing real humanitarian engineering issues in developing country communities, such as the need for "clean water, sanitation and hygiene, energy, basic infrastructure, waste systems." They apply engineering knowledge and work on projects with other NGOs in South Asia, South East Asia and Australian Aboriginal students and in 2012 its schools program won 'Science Engagement Initiative of the Year' in the 2012 Western Australian Science Awards.

One example mentioned in the ACT roundtable was the organization of workshops involving students tackling a real life engineering project for a developing country. In this case the project had students investigate and come up with a way of making water filters for a village. According to one

roundtable participant the students were looking at how they could apply the local technologies and the local knowledge to build up something that was sustainable. He felt this approach worked because for students “that’s where you could make connections between technology and science content, and understand science as a human endeavor, and [go] back to human rights” (ACT RT).

## Indigenous Rights

### *Reconciliation Australia*

Reconciliation Australia (RA) is a national organization promoting reconciliation between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the Australian community. RA organizes Reconciliation events across Australia, Closing the Gap Conversations, celebrations during National Reconciliation Week, and a schools Reconciliation Action Plan program. In NSW it also stages a *Schools Reconciliation Challenge* that showcases a school’s commitment to reconciliation, focusing on children aged 10 to 16 years. A major recent campaign is their *You Me Unity* campaign, which is working to support the recognition of Indigenous Australians in the Constitution.

### *ANTar ((Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation)*

ANTar is a national advocacy community-based organization dedicated to working to achieve justice, rights and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. One of the activities organized by ANTAR that has involved school students is the *Sea of Hands* and has produced a schools kit to help students create their own *Sea of Hands* installation. More recently ANTAR has been organizing Constitutional Recognition presentations as part of a national effort to have Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island peoples recognized in the Australian Constitution.

### *Fred Hollows Foundation- Diplomacy Training Program (NSW/NT)*

The Fred Hollows Foundation works to end avoidable blindness, restore sight in Aboriginal communities in Australia, and developing countries in Africa, South Asia, Southeast Asia and the Pacific. Young people are able to get involved in various fundraising activities and volunteering. The Foundation celebrates the UN’s *International Day of the World’s Indigenous Peoples* and as part of its work to empower Indigenous advocates for the

rights of their people in health, education and social justice issues (Fred Hollows Foundation, Darwin RT).

### **Special Events and Festivals**

Another important way school students are able to learn about a range of social issues is through class involvement in local or national community based special events or festivals. Schools are able to choose from a number of special events and festivals that take place over the school year and focus on particular rights and social justice issues. We have listed a number of the most prominent events that do involve schools.

#### **Human Rights Day (December 10)**

Human Rights Day is the day that marks the adoption in December 1948 when the United Nations adopted the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. In Australia the AHRC encourages the commemoration and celebration of the day. AHRC has also produced a set of resources aimed at Year 9 and above classes in subjects such as Civics and Citizenship, Society and Environment, Design and Technology, English, Legal Studies, and International Studies (AHRC).

#### **National Reconciliation Week (27 May to 3 June)**

National Reconciliation Week is an annual week of celebrations to recognize the place of Aboriginal and Torres Islander peoples within Australia and marks two important events in Australia's Indigenous history – the 1967 Referendum and the 1992 *Mabo* decision in the High Court. Celebrations are organized in schools and across the Australian community.

#### **NAIDOC Week (7- 14 July)**

NAIDOC Week is a national event in July that celebrates the history, culture and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Islander peoples. Schools celebrate aspects of Aboriginal history and culture and cover the history of reconciliation (ACT RT).

#### **Refugee Week (16 to 22 June)**

The Refugee Council of Australia organizes *Refugee Week* events and celebrations nationally for a week in mid June as a way of raising public

awareness about refugees and celebrating their positive contributions to Australian Society. The week always includes World Refugee Day (June 20) and a *Refugee Week Resource Kit* is produced to help organizers including teachers to prepare for the week.

### **Harmony Day (March 21)**

*Harmony Day* is part of an Australian Government funded initiative to promote community harmony and address racism and involves schools across the country as a day to celebrate cultural diversity. The day coincides with the UN's *International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination*.

### **Fairer World Festival (Hobart)**

An example of an annual festival that involves school aged children is the *Fairer World Festival* in Hobart that specifically involves children aged 9 to 11 years (NSW RT).

### **School Excursions or Camps**

An important and continuing form of other learning opportunities outside the classroom is school excursions or school camps. A few examples have been listed below.

#### **Parliament House Canberra visits**

One of the excursions that involve many primary school students in NSW and Victoria during their upper primary years is visiting Parliament House in Canberra and the Democracy Museum in Old Parliament House as part of their learning about civic and political rights.

#### **Melbourne school visits**

In Victoria schools, especially those outside Melbourne, arrange school excursions that last a week in Melbourne, enabling students to visit places like the Immigration Museum, the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre, and Courage to Care (an exhibition on Holocaust Awareness and bystanders coordinated by the Jewish community). Also as the Eureka Stockade rebellion of 1854 is an important part of Victoria's colonial history and Australia's struggle for democracy, many schools also organize an excursion to Ballarat

to visit the Eureka Centre's Museum of Australian Democracy at Eureka and learn about the struggle for rights in the 19th Century (Victoria RT).

### The Big Issue visits

School students in Melbourne and Sydney are able to learn about issues related to homelessness through a schools program run by *The Big Issue*, which involves homeless people talking about their experiences of homelessness with school children (NSW & Victoria RT).

### Conclusion

Analyzing the curriculum opportunities for the teaching of human rights across Australian state and territories remains a complex and multi-dimensional task that has not been attempted in any previous study, prior to this one. Given the difficulties of engaging with all curriculum authorities, syllabus and curriculum documents across each school sector, and taking into account the changing landscape of the Australian Curriculum process, a number of insights can be drawn from our analysis.

Before setting out any learning opportunities it is important to consider which human rights students are expected to learn about across their school learning stages. Among the key curriculum dimensions to consider across each of three key stages of learning are whether: human rights topics are explicit or implicit, compulsory or optional elective, sector specific initiatives and the range of other curricular learning opportunities. The main findings are:

- the Senior Years 11-12 provide the most *explicit* and *implicit* learning opportunities to study topics that are clearly related to human rights issues.
- only a small number and proportion of students are likely to study human rights issues to any significant extent across their school years
- study of human rights issues takes place without any clear overall definition of rights, and mostly without any overarching context or link back to UN declarations, treaties, conventions or recent Australian rights legislation.

### Senior Years

- the main *explicit* opportunities found in this study are in *History, Geography, Legal Studies* subjects and the *Civics and Citizenship* unit.
- a number of subjects with small enrolments, and not widely available, also provide explicit opportunities. The subjects are in a few learning areas – Politics; Society and Culture; Aboriginal Studies; Women's Studies; and Religious Studies.
- *implicit* opportunities were found in *English; Science; Economics & Business*.
- only a few Subjects – *History, Australian & Global Politics, Australian & International Politics, Aboriginal Studies* - specifically mention any UN human rights declarations, treaties or conventions or Australian legislation.

### Secondary Years

- across the Secondary Years 7 to 10, it was mainly Years 9 and 10 that offered the main explicit opportunities – in *History, Geography, Aboriginal Studies* and *Civics and Citizenship* units.
- the main *implicit* opportunities across Years 7 to 10 were in *English, Science, and Economics* subjects.

### Primary Years

- human rights did not appear to be *explicitly* mentioned across the Primary school years. Implicit opportunities were found mostly in the *Human Society and its Environment* (HSIE or its equivalent) Learning Area.
- the main relevant subjects included *History; Geography, English, Physical Development Health & Physical Education* (PDHPE); and *Civics and Citizenship* units.

### Impact of state and territory human rights legislation

Despite the ACT in 2004 and Victoria in 2007 enacting important state based human rights legislation, these legislative steps have generally had little impact on their schools – although Victoria has provided some links to a number of syllabus documents and a set of teacher support documents.

### Other learning opportunities

Valuable, interesting and wide-ranging human rights education work is being undertaken in schools by a number of government agencies and key NGOs.

- the types of activities they provide include community-school initiatives (projects, programs and campaigns); special events and festivals; and school excursions and camps.
- the human rights issues addressed by key NGOs can be categorized as being broadly rights-based; addressing civil and political rights; children's rights; economic rights; humanitarian and Indigenous rights.

While it is recognized that individual NGOs are undertaking valuable work in promoting human rights in schools, this tends to happen on an ad hoc basis, and it is difficult for sustained relationships to be developed between NGOs and schools.

Importantly, while all together these findings show a set of fragmented and somewhat limited opportunities that are concentrated in the last few years of schooling and studied by a only a relatively small number of students overall, what is already in place does provide a basis for building up a more detailed and comprehensive approach to human rights education in the Australian school curriculum.

Any initiatives will need to be led by a number of key staff with a knowledge of the curriculum development process, have an understanding of the complexity of Australian school sector and be aware of the valuable role of government agencies and NGOs in providing a range of key other learning opportunities to schools.

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