Dear Principal/Stakeholder

We are writing to update you on the status of work on the Australian Curriculum and to clarify the steps required before any implementation of the new curriculum can be undertaken in NSW schools.

In early December 2010 the Ministers for Education, including the NSW Minister, Hon. Verity Firth, are due to consider for adoption the Australian Curriculum for the learning areas of English, Mathematics, Science and History, from Kindergarten to Year 10. Irrespective of the Ministers’ decision, you will be aware that the NSW Minister has already indicated that it will not be possible for the new curriculum to be implemented in NSW in 2011. In addition, the NSW Government has emphasised that while NSW is committed to a national curriculum, it cannot approve a curriculum for NSW schools until it is assured that it meets at least the standards of the current NSW curriculum.

In the lead up to the Ministers’ meeting, the NSW Minister has sought advice from the NSW Board of Studies (the Board) on the appropriateness of the current drafts of the Australian Curriculum for NSW schools. The Board will utilise its normal consultative process involving representatives of teachers, principals and parents to develop this advice.

Under the NSW Education Act, a NSW syllabus can only be approved by the Minister on the recommendation of the Board, and in accord with criteria set out in the Act. This process will follow Ministers’ endorsement of a common Australian Curriculum.

Subject to the endorsement by the Board and the approval of the Minister, the Australian Curriculum will constitute a key component of new curriculum documents for NSW schools in each of the relevant learning areas. The Board’s work will be undertaken through the normal Board syllabus development process entailing engagement with the NSW teaching profession, parents and other experts. This development process will:

- Ensure maintenance of the clarity of teaching and learning expectations that exists in the current NSW curriculum and which NSW teachers expect to be maintained
- allow the Board to work with teachers to address concerns arising from differences in the presentation of the Australian Curriculum
- allow the Australian Curriculum to be presented in Stages rather than Years
- facilitate integration of aspects of learning from across Content Strands within subjects
- clarify the content where this is required, especially with regard to teaching sequences
- address how quality outcomes can be achieved for students through the NSW Board of Studies Life Skills courses
• ensure that quality outcomes are achievable within the existing NSW indicative time requirements for Years 7 to 10, and within the existing NSW Key Learning Area structure, as set out in the Education Act
• allow a common and agreed Australian Curriculum to be presented to NSW teachers in an appropriate timeframe.

These developments will be consistent with the objective of achieving common curriculum content nationally, representing an essential learning entitlement of all Australian students. All of the Board’s work will be conducted in close consultation with the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (‘ACARA’) and with other states and territories, to ensure fidelity of the complementary NSW materials with the Australian Curriculum in each learning area.

Some dimensions of the Australian Curriculum currently being developed by ACARA are not being considered for implementation by NSW at this stage. These include the Achievement Standards and General Capabilities. ACARA intends to continue working on the development and validation of these materials and NSW will participate fully in this ongoing work.

If the Australian Curriculum for English, Mathematics, Science and History K-10 is endorsed by Ministers in December 2010, the Board’s syllabus development will begin early in 2011. An implementation schedule will be developed in full consultation with NSW teacher and principal representatives across all sectors with a view to substantial implementation by 2013.

We would like to thank the many teachers, principals and parents who have contributed work on this matter so far.

Further advice on the Australian Curriculum in NSW schools will be provided to principals in early 2011.

Yours sincerely

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