

MEDIA RELEASE

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PHYSICAL EDUCATION MUST BE A CORE SUBJECT IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

The recent draft Charter on Primary Schools developed by the Australian Primary Principals Association (APPA) proposes that there should be four core areas taught in primary schools – English literacy, Mathematics, Science and History. Disappointingly and without any rationale, Physical Education is excluded from this core group.

The draft Charter proposes that schools can offer other activities, such as ‘sport and physical activity’ but schools should offer these according to ‘individual and local needs, interests and circumstances’.

History shows that relegating physical education in this way does not work. During the 1980’s, schools were able to be more ‘flexible’ in relation to Physical Education. As a result, Physical Education became an optional subject which led to the finding from a Senate Inquiry into Physical and Sport Education (1992 “ *physical education is being dramatically reduced throughout Australia and there is a lack of political commitment to address the problems... Education authorities throughout Australia need to show greater leadership and commitment*”.

Dr Jeff Walkley, President, the Australian Council for Health, Physical Education and Recreation, Victorian Branch says “ A move to marginalise Physical Education in this way is short sighted, given the alarming statistics on childhood obesity, which are indicating epidemic proportions. If Physical Education is not grouped among the core areas it will be perceived as not important. ”

“With the percentage of young people who are overweight almost doubling in the past 20 years, Physical Education helps children to develop the skills and knowledge to lead a healthy lifestyle”

“Whilst schools alone cannot solve the problem of childhood obesity, children spend a significant amount of their lives at schools and therefore it is a wasted opportunity if physical activity is not promoted and provided during the school day”.

Mary Wilson, Executive Director, the Australian Council for Health, Physical Education and Recreation, Victorian Branch says “the lack of prominence of Physical Education in this curriculum model will be viewed adversely by Principals and School Councils when they make their decisions over staffing and resource allocation. It’s all about perception – Physical Education won’t be viewed as important and will become a low priority”.

“Furthermore the draft Charter is not aligned with the current school curriculum in Victoria which clearly indicates that Physical Education is viewed in the same way as other core areas. The Victorian Education Department has supported compulsory Physical Education, including Sport, since 1994. We know that parents and health professionals applaud this initiative and would not support any marginalisation of Physical Education in schools”

AVAILABLE FOR INTERVIEW

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