

# The Australian Council for Health, Physical Education and Recreation (ACHPER)



## The Curriculum Future of Health and Physical Education in Australia: A National Statement and National Action Plan

The Australian Council for Health, Physical Education and Recreation (ACHPER) is developing (i) a national statement on the curriculum future of HPE in Australia; and (ii) an accompanying action plan for advancing implementation of the proposals inherent in the statement.

This paper presents a draft statement, directed to two key audiences:

1. ACHPER's national membership. Consultation with members, facilitated by State branches, is critical if ACHPER is to effectively communicate a case for Federal and State/Territory governments to commit to Health and Physical Education as a curriculum entitlement for all young Australians; and
2. Representatives of key stakeholders in the provision of Health and Physical Education, physical activity and sport for young people. ACHPER acknowledges that endorsement of and delivery on a curriculum entitlement will only be achieved through collaborative and sustained advocacy by the many organisations and agencies who share ACHPER's belief that 'an educated nation, comprising active and healthy young people is the best investment we can make in their future'.

Feedback, providing endorsement and/or comment is sought on the draft statement directly to the National Office (e-mail: [ned@achper.org.au](mailto:ned@achper.org.au)) or via ACHPER branch representatives.

**All feedback must be received by 31<sup>st</sup> October 2008.**

Feedback will be utilised to finalise a position paper to be presented to Federal and state/territory government departments and curriculum authorities; and used by the ACHPER National Curriculum working group as the basis for advancing proposals in collaboration with government and curriculum authority representatives and partner agencies.

## Introduction

Why is it timely and necessary for ACHPER to release a national statement about the curriculum future of Health and Physical Education in Australia?

ACHPER is developing a national statement:

- to actively and constructively contribute to the ongoing debates and developments relating to a National Curriculum and national approaches to curriculum;
- to provide a timely and considered response to the new Federal government's policy proposals for education; and
- to present proposals and recommendations that can be the basis of ongoing productive partnerships in policy and curriculum development.

In conjunction with development of a national statement, ACHPER is committed to identifying strategies to inform and advance implementation of recommendations incorporated in the national statement.

## Principles underpinning a national statement and national action plan

1. An educated nation, comprising active and healthy young people is the best investment we can make in their future;
2. HPE<sup>1</sup> needs to be recognised first and foremost as an educational endeavour and experience. With this as the prime purpose, it is fundamentally distinct from either 'physical activity' and 'sport' (see clarification points below);
3. HPE should be a key element of a curriculum entitlement for all young Australians. This is in accordance with repeated international declarations that have called upon governments worldwide to make this invaluable commitment to children's education and through that, to their health and wellbeing;
4. The school is not the only, but nevertheless, a very significant setting for children's intellectual, physical, social, emotional and spiritual development. Maximising that development relies on the provision of coordinated learning opportunities in school, family and community settings. The statement and action plan is underpinned by a commitment to enhancing the coherency of policy development and implementation action across the policy arenas education, health and sport.
5. Enhancing education nationally in Australia should draw upon best practice across all the States and Territories. It should incorporate flexibility to enable education in the States and Territories to be responsive to and provide for distinct local learning needs and contexts.
6. Professional associations have a responsibility to inform ongoing curriculum development undertaken by Federal and State/Territory governments and be responsive to agreed national education policy directions. They have a lead role to play in promoting advancements in curriculum development and pedagogical practices across the States and Territories and across all schools in Australia;
7. Planning for and investment in curriculum reform in schools needs to be accompanied by aligned development and investment in teacher education across Australia.

## Points of clarification

**The terminology associated with HPE is acknowledged as varied and open to differing interpretations. Amidst this variation, ACHPER seeks clarity and agreement upon the following points:**

- HPE is fundamentally about learning. HPE is concerned with the provision of learning experiences that are educationally worthwhile in and of themselves, and that seek to develop skills, knowledge, understandings, attitudes and values and that will enable young people to live healthy and active lives.
- HPE draws on a number of sub-disciplines, including physical education, health education, personal development, outdoor education and dance. Each is

---

<sup>1</sup> HPE will be the terminology used in a National Statement, reflecting the identification of HPE as a learning area in the Adelaide Declaration and more recently, in Federalist Paper 2.

acknowledged as providing distinct learning opportunities. State and Territory curricula variously draw on and integrate the sub-disciplines to achieve breadth and balance in learning in HPE.

- Across Australia, as a learning area HPE embraces and extends to the notions of learning 'in, through and about' movement<sup>2</sup>. HPE can also fundamentally be regarded as learning 'for' movement in diverse ways and contexts. Contexts of physical activity and sport are therefore central to HPE, but HPE is distinguished from 'physical activity' and 'sport' by virtue of its learning focus and agendas.
- Linkages with learning beyond the formal curriculum and beyond schools (in family, formal and informal community contexts, particularly associated with physical activity and sport) is a central consideration in curriculum planning, teaching and learning in HPE. HPE is a lifelong process and endeavour that has its foundations in early childhood education, and extends throughout and beyond the compulsory years of schooling. In identifying these characteristics of HPE ACHPER also reaffirms HPE as distinct from physical activity and sport. This is reflected in the first point of clarification above. Figure 1 also articulates key linkages between school and community-based provision.
- HPE has an important role to play in the advancement of skills that are variously referred to as 'essential' or 'life' skills (including communication and interpersonal skills, and problem solving) and to learning traditionally associated with other curriculum areas (including literacy and numeracy).

#### **What ACHPER as a national professional association is committed and able to achieve and facilitate.**

ACHPER is committed to:

- Partnerships as the foundation of a national statement and efforts to ensure implementation of it;
- Identifying and seeking the adoption of agreed strategies for advancing proposals and recommendations inherent in the national statement;
- Advocating and lobbying for resources to ensure implementation of proposals and recommendations inherent in the national statement. It is anticipated that the formal submission of the statement to Federal government will be accompanied by a submission for funding to support its advancement and that the submission for funding will identify and incorporate in-kind financial support from key stakeholders.

#### **ACHPER's position on the future curriculum position, content and status of HPE**

##### **The outcomes that are being sought through the development, endorsement and implementation of the national statement:**

This statement seeks enhanced and nationally comparable learning opportunities for all young Australians in the area of HPE. The intention is to secure a foundation from which more young people will gain the skills, knowledge and understanding to lead healthy and active lives, and support and encourage others to do likewise.

In Federalist Paper 2<sup>3</sup>, Health and Physical Education was reaffirmed as an integral element of a 'broad and comprehensive' curriculum. It was clearly stated that; 'Education should support the spiritual, moral, cultural and physical development of young people as well as their intellectual development' (p.17). Federalist paper 2 (pages 21-22) also reaffirmed the

Adelaide Declaration's identification of Health and Physical Education as a learning area, central to a National Curriculum:

---

<sup>2</sup> Arnold's conceptualisation has been widely employed in curriculum development in HPE across Australia and internationally.

<sup>3</sup> Council for the Australian Federation (2007). *Federalist paper 2. The Future of Schooling in Australia. Revised Edition. A Report by the Council for the Australian Federation. September 2007.* Melbourne: Department of Premier and Cabinet.

The Adelaide Declaration nominates eight key learning areas for the curriculum in the compulsory years of schooling:

- the arts
- English
- health and physical education
- languages other than English
- mathematics
- science
- studies of society and environment
- technology

For the most part this list has served schools well. Several of the key learning areas are fundamentally important disciplines: English, mathematics, science and languages other than English. Health and physical education are increasingly critical for student and community well-being. The arts provide rich experiences and opportunities for all students. Technology is an important cross-disciplinary area for students of the twenty-first century. Studies of society and environment has been criticised by a number of commentators, partly because its focus is not clear from the label. It has become increasingly clear that what should be studied under this label are the disciplines of history, geography and economics. In the statement about the future of schooling in Australia, in Chapter 4, these disciplines are made explicit under the umbrella of social science/humanities and reflect the important objectives for students outlined at the start of this curriculum section.

In addition to technology, there are two other areas that have become more prominent in the curriculum since the Adelaide Declaration. First, the States, Territories and the Commonwealth have cooperated in the inclusion of civics and citizenship in the curriculum, to nurture citizenship and civic behaviour amongst our students. Second, the study of business and the development of commercial and financial literacy skills can assist students in their middle and later years at school to prepare for work in the twenty-first century.

Since coming to office, the Federal Labor government has confirmed its pre-election commitment to advancing towards a national curriculum. To date, HPE has not been considered in relation to development of a national curriculum. ACHPER wishes to work productively with Federal, State and Territory government, curriculum authorities and other stakeholders to ensure a secure curriculum presence for HPE and to establish HPE as a curriculum entitlement for all young Australians. ACHPER urges the government to formally acknowledge that:

- HPE is the area of the curriculum that can offer education for healthy lifestyles; that is, lifestyles characterised by and recognising the importance of health and physical education and physical activity for physical, social, emotional wellbeing.
- HPE is the area of the curriculum that is directly concerned with the development of skills, knowledge, understandings, attitudes and values that will counter so called lifestyle diseases that are widely acknowledged as representing an unprecedented threat to the health and economic future of Australia;
- As such, HPE should be an integral element of a curriculum entitlement for all young Australians. ACHPER is not seeking a highly regulative, prescriptive set of requirements relating to HPE curriculum. It is seeking national collaboration to establish an agreed curriculum entitlement for all young Australians.
- It is anticipated that such an entitlement will require the development of a framework that presents the curriculum as much more than a set of content to cover. ACHPER's focus is on curriculum as the basis for achieving learning outcomes that are accepted as essential for all young Australians to achieve. ACHPER advocates that:
  - all students should be provided with opportunities to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes to lead healthy and active lives;
  - all students should be provided with the knowledge and skills to be able to make informed decisions about their health and lifestyle and be able to seek help and support when necessary;
  - all students should be provided with opportunities to develop the skills to become critical consumers of health information;

- all students should be provided with the opportunity to learn the fundamental and applied movement skills to be able to participate successfully in a variety of physical activities that promote positive attitudes to health and lifelong physical activity participation.
- In line with the recommendations arising from Federalist Paper 2 (2007), it is envisaged that progressing towards an agreed HPE curriculum entitlement for all young Australians will:
  - involve the identification of a set core content and achievement standards for HPE that are expected of students at the end of their schooling and at key junctures during their schooling;
  - direct attention towards the alignment of curriculum, pedagogy and assessment;
  - maintain flexibility for jurisdictions, systems, schools and teachers to design and implement a curriculum for students to achieve the specified standards; and
  - seek consistency in reporting of learning achievement in HPE nationally.

### **Finance, resourcing and steps in advancing the national statement and action plan.**

Effective development, communication and advancement of the National Statement and national action plan will require national and related, aligned and coordinated State/Territory action. ACHPER recognises that a unified front in advocating a set of agreed messages will be critical in securing political and public support for the proposals put forward.

The draft national statement has arisen from intensive work on the part of a national working group and consultation with the ACHPER National Board. Extensive national consultation with ACHPER members and key stakeholders is the next step.

Feedback from consultation will inform the development of a position paper to be presented to Federal and State/Territory governments, curriculum authorities and other stakeholders. ACHPER will seek funding to convene a national forum to address implementation of proposals and recommendations in the national statement.

A recommendation will also be made to Federal government for the appointment of a cross-departmental policy advisor to work with and promote policy connections and coherence between federal government action in the areas of education, health and sport.

The resource issues associated with a national HPE curriculum entitlement will be fully articulated and accompanied by recommendations for how the resource issues should be addressed. ACHPER's emphasis is that there is an undeniable and significant cost involved in ensuring a curriculum entitlement. More importantly, however, this needs to be recognised as an investment in the health, wellbeing and life prospects for young Australians, and in the future of Australia – and it is critical that all concerned also consider the costs of not investing.

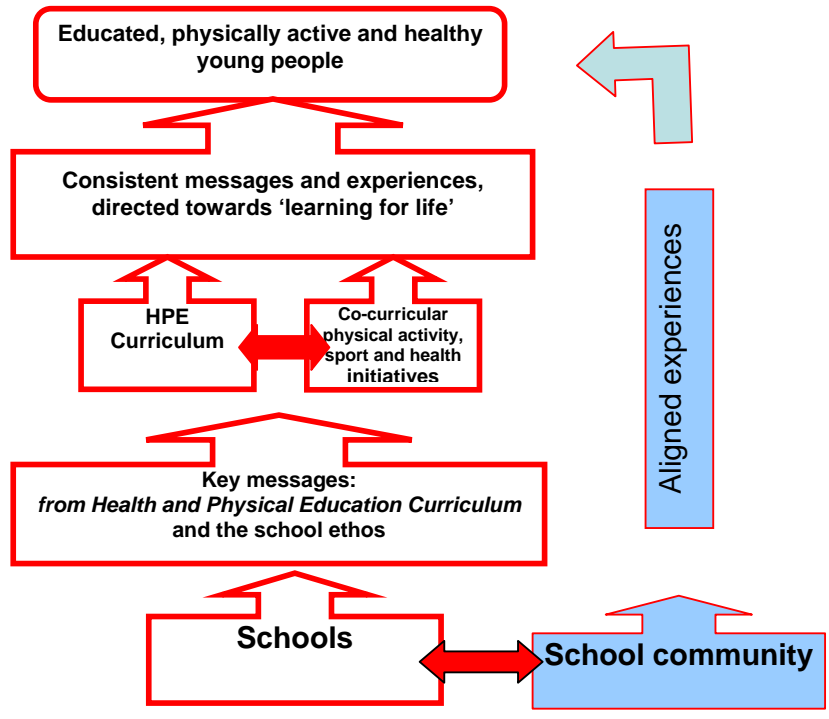


Figure 1. Coordinated, coherent curricular and co-curricular opportunities for young people (Adapted from Gillespie, 2006).