Mr Robert Randall
General Manager Curriculum
Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA)
Level 10
255 Pitt Street
Sydney NSW 2000

30 May 2010

Dear Mr Randall

The Australian Council of TESOL Associations (ACTA) is pleased to offer feedback to you on the draft K*-10 Australian Curriculum in English, history, mathematics and science.

The attached response has been prepared and reviewed by a working party comprising ACTA councillors who have extensive expertise in the field of curriculum development for learners of English as an additional language or dialect (EAL/D). It has the endorsement of ACTA's constituent state and territory associations for Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) in Australia.

ACTA is firmly committed to the position that EAL/D learners and their specific English language learning needs must be acknowledged and addressed in every learning area within the Australian Curriculum as a non-negotiable educational entitlement. In order to learn English – and to learn *in and through* English – and to facilitate their successful transition to mainstream classes, EAL/D learners at all year levels require targeted intervention and support from specialist English as a second language (ESL) teachers, where these are available, and the provision of appropriate ESL teaching and learning pathways and programs.

However, with the exception of full-time intensive programs for newly-arrived students, ACTA also recognises the imperative that most EAL/D learners in Australia will spend the majority of their school lives in mainstream classrooms. Therefore, the Australian Curriculum documents must provide guidance to *all* teachers to support

EAL/D students to access the content and skills of their learning areas (including subject specific language and literacy) and to develop general English language proficiency (ELP). ACTA supports the establishment by ACARA of an EAL/D Advisory Group and the proposal to develop a supplementary EAL/D document that describes key stages in English language learning for students whose first language is not English and which will demonstrate the "bridge" into each of the Australian Curriculum documents for this particular cohort of learners.

The development of a world-class Australian Curriculum requires a cutting-edge understanding of the impact of increasing globalisation on languages and modes of communication, on the complexities of cultural transmission and cross-fertilisation within and across national borders, and on the optimal and most ethical strategies for the teaching of English as a global language. To this end, we would welcome the opportunity to consult further with ACARA and to collaborate in the ongoing development and implementation of the Australian Curriculum and the planning and facilitation of programs and strategies which will better equip all Australian teachers to understand and utilise the diverse skills, abilities, experiences and cultural understandings of EAL/D learners in their classrooms and to assist these students in their English language learning journey.

I look forward to meeting you at our International Conference on Friday 9 July and would like to take this opportunity to thank you again for agreeing to address the topic of how the Australian Curriculum will address the specific needs and abilities of EAL/D learners across all learning areas and to meet with ESL program managers and curriculum officers from the states and territories in a round table forum following your presentation.

Yours Sincerely

Robert Jackson
ACTA President
0414 554 216
robert.jackson44@hotmail.com

AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL OF
TESOL ASSOCIATIONS
(ACTA)

Response to draft K*-10 Australian Curriculum in English,

history, mathematics and science

30 May 2010

Preamble

The Australian Council of TESOL Associations (ACTA) welcomes this opportunity to respond to the draft K*-10 Australian Curriculum in English, history, mathematics and science.

ACTA is the national coordinating body of state and territory professional associations for the Teaching of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL). ACTA represents and advocates on behalf of teachers, parents and guardians, and English-language learners, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who speak traditional Indigenous languages, creoles and Aboriginal English, in all education sectors and contexts across Australia.

ACTA's objectives are
- to ensure *access to English language instruction* for speakers of other languages and dialects (from Indigenous, refugee and migrant backgrounds, and international students)
- to encourage *implementation and delivery of quality professional programs* at all levels, and
- to promote *study, research and development of TESOL* at state, national and international levels.

ACTA's membership comes from all educational sectors: pre-schools; schools; adult, community, TAFE and other VET settings; consultancy services in state and territory education departments and the independent and Catholic sectors; and university teacher education departments.

(NOTE: The following comprises a full compilation of the notes and comments provided in our survey submission.)

Content descriptions

> 6   Please identify any content that you believe should be included in the Australian Curriculum that is not currently, and give reasons for your selection.

The subject specific language and literacy demands of each learning area in each year level must be made explicit within the content descriptions. For example, in mathematics, language structures and features such as the passive voice ("If 7 <u>is taken from</u> 10 …") and nominalisation (e.g., "product", "quotient", etc.) are commonly used at much earlier year levels (i.e., *Year 1, Number and Algebra, 5. Addition and subtraction* and *Year 2, Number and Algebra, 6. Multiplication and division* respectively) than in other learning areas. These aspects of the language of mathematics must be taught explicitly to students by subject mathematics teachers. It is particularly important for learners of English as an additional language or dialect (EAL/D) that the subject specific language and literacy elements of mathematics are taught at the appropriate year levels as the two examples provided above are late-learnt skills in the normal process of second language learning.

Additionally, many EAL/D learners do not have passive voice constructions in their first language (L1). Errors made by EAL/D students arising from unfamiliarity with the grammatical structure (i.e., a *language* skill) are prone to be incorrectly assessed and misreported by mathematics teachers as an inability to complete subtraction tasks (i.e., a subject *content* skill).

English
A more consistent and clearer delineation of English language learning should be provided in the *Language* strand of the English learning area document. The role of subject English in guiding language and literacy teaching across the curriculum is not sufficiently clear to ensure that relevant language structures and features are taught within each learning area. An explicit statement of the role of subject English teachers in supporting the learning of English language and literacy across the curriculum, particularly in the primary years, and of the shift in responsibility for teaching subject specific language and literacy skills to subject teachers as the language demands of learning areas become more sophisticated and specialised in the secondary years, should be provided in the *Links to other learning areas* in the English document. The supplementary role of subject English in the teaching of language and literacy skills for other learning areas must also be clearly reflected in the English content descriptions.

The current statement in the *Links to other learning areas* in the English document that other learning areas "will draw upon the knowledge taught in the language strand and will incorporate subject specific language knowledge as required" must be reiterated in the other learning area documents. However, as noted, there is at present insufficient cross-curriculum content in the *Language* strand of the English document to guide teachers of other learning areas.

ACTA strongly supports the inclusion of the first content point in the *Language* strand of the English curriculum document for each year level which explores the

status and history of English and its rise as a global language as an important iteration of the *Intercultural understanding* general capability. However, there seems to be an omission of this content item in Year 9. We recommend that an additional point be added as the first content item in the *Language* strand for Year 9 as follows:

> *1. English as a global language*
> An overview of the current status of English as the lingua franca of global trade and communications and of English language teaching as an industry.
>
> Elaborations could centre on issues such as: the ubiquity of English in trade, media and telecommunications; the role of language as a medium for the transmission of culture; linguistic imperialism, the shift from traditional Indigenous languages to newer varieties and displacement of local languages and cultures; establishment of ESL and EFL teaching programs and practices; importance of first language maintenance for English language learners; rehabilitation of heritage languages; etc.

In the focus on different varieties of Standard Australian English and varieties of non-standard English (e.g., in *Year 3, Language, 1. Comparing dialects*; *Year 6, Language, 1. Nature of dialects*; *Year 7, Language 1. English in Asia* and *Year 8, Language, 1. Language change*) and different systems of communication (e.g., in *Year 5, Language, 1. Systems of communication*), it should also be emphasised that differences between different varieties of English are conceptual and pragmatic, not simply geographic and historical.

However, apart from this content point, the general capability of *Intercultural understanding* (i.e., understanding the complexities of one's own and other cultures and their interrelationships) needs to be more effectively integrated into the content descriptions as an issue for critical examination. The statement in the *Organisation* section of the English document that "Intercultural understanding can be enhanced if students are exposed to other views of the world" and that "studying literature helps shape personal, national and cultural identities" might be more meaningfully reflected in the content through, for example, an acknowledgement that the concept of "literacy" is a Western construct which privileges academic textual modes and stylistics (e.g., the "essay") and individual performance over more creative and community-based uses of written language (e.g., in *Year 9, Literature, 4. Evaluating* and *Year 9, Literacy, Reflecting on text*).

Similarly, students are expected to engage with "highly predictable texts" and texts which are "relatively predictable" in Kindergarten and Year 1, to recognise that "texts are organised in predictable ways" (e.g., in *Year 2, Language, 7. Text structure*), and to use strategies such as "predicting" and "drawing on prior knowledge" in order "to interpret ideas and information" (e.g., in *Year 4, Literacy, 7. Comprehension strategies*). Acknowledgement should be made within the content descriptions that textual predictions (and interpretations) depend upon culturally-based schemata, and that teachers need to assist EAL/D learners to develop socio-cultural competence in order to read and comprehend texts in English.

The draft English document as it currently stands tends to project a notion of culture as static and exotic rather than as dynamic and complex (e.g., "The curriculum also places emphasis on understanding the cultures of Asia" in the *Rationale*, references to texts and stories "from their own and other cultures" in year 2 and year 3, etc.) In addition, there is a greater emphasis on literature from the Asian region than on the cultural diversity of Australian literature or literary traditions from other regions of the world. The content of the English learning area should encourage students to explore and examine notions of culture and cultural identity through interaction with others and provide students with access to a broader range of literary traditions, including the rich heritage of multicultural literature in Australia.

Finally, the content strands within the English document are difficult to use as a tool for programming and planning. The layout which lists the three strands side by side implies that there is connection across the strands; however, this is not the case. A clearer conceptual framework should be provided to show links across the strands.

Mathematics
The statement in the *Links to other learning areas* in the English document that other learning areas "will draw upon the knowledge taught in the language strand and will incorporate subject specific language knowledge as required" must be reiterated in the mathematics document. The content descriptions should be extended to include the full range of texts which students read, respond to and compose in mathematics, along with some of the prevalent language features including the language required to describe, explain, compare, justify and classify.

The inconsistency and sporadic nature of references to subject specific language and literacy skills in the content descriptions provides insufficient and inadequate guidance to mathematics teachers. For example, students are expected to solve word problems without explicit teaching of the language of word problems or the metaphorical language used to express mathematical concepts and processes. In addition to this, the content descriptions state that students will "use everyday language" to describe and explain mathematical operations and phenomena up to year 4, and then, with no further reference to the development of subject specific language and literacy skills and understanding, they are expected to be able to "use formal mathematical language" to classify shapes and objects including congruence and similarity in year 10. Precise and consistent terminology, greater coherency, and a more thoroughgoing understanding of the differences between social and academic language usage and also of the specific language and literacy demands of subject mathematics need to be made explicit in the content descriptions. It is also important to recognise and acknowledge that "everyday language" for EAL/D students is not necessarily English, and that many of these learners, as well as possessing the skills and understanding the content, might indeed be able to describe, explain and discuss their knowledge, skills and understanding quite proficiently, though not in English.

The importance of oral communication and oral language in learning is not reflected in the introductory statements or in the content descriptions and elaborations in the document. A statement should be included under the heading *Reasoning* in the proficiency strands about the importance of oral interaction in the development of reasoning skills and in problem solving. Additionally, a statement that "oral

interaction is integral in learning to learn" should be incorporated into the *Thinking skills* in the *General capabilities* section. The importance of oral interaction in learning mathematics should also be reflected in the content descriptions and elaborations.

The general capability of *Intercultural understanding* is not evident in the content of the mathematics document. Whilst reference is made to the number and time systems of other cultures, there is no acknowledgement of the respect and value that needs to be accorded these culturally-based conceptions and traditions. Greater emphasis might also be given to the contributions to higher mathematics made by mathematicians from diverse cultures, and parallel historical developments of mathematical concepts and principles in non-Western cultures.

Science
The statement in the *Links to other learning areas* in the English document that other learning areas "will draw upon the knowledge taught in the language strand and will incorporate subject specific language knowledge as required" must be reiterated in the science document. The specific language and literacy skills required to read, respond to and compose scientific texts are not identified in the content descriptions in the draft science document, though general references to literacy skills are made consistently throughout. These language and literacy demands (e.g., describing objects and events, interpreting descriptions, reading and providing instructions, explaining ideas, writing scientific reports, procedural recounts and expositions, etc.) should be incorporated into the content descriptions as appropriate.

Oral interaction (through collaborative work) is not apparent in the content descriptions for years 9 and 10 as it is in the *Science inquiry skills* strand for years 7 and 8 and should also be incorporated as a process for student learning in those years.

The content descriptions for the science learning area provide a limited view of the general capability of *Intercultural understanding*. Stronger emphasis should be given to the role of science in contributing to intercultural understanding, including a greater focus on contributions made to the discipline by scientists from non-Western cultures and scientific traditions and practices from a broader range of cultures.

History
The statement in the *Links to other learning areas* in the English document that other learning areas "will draw upon the knowledge taught in the language strand and will incorporate subject specific language knowledge as required" must be reiterated in the history document.

While the content descriptions in the history learning area include references to a range of text types including narrative, description, imaginative response, explanation, argument and description, they do not provide direction about the structures and features of these types of texts or the specific language skills required to read, respond to and compose these texts.

Oral interaction as a tool for learning is not apparent in the content beyond K-6 and should be similarly incorporated in the content descriptions for years 7-10 by using

words and phrases such as "talking about", "commenting on", "telling", "explaining", "discussing", etc.

The content descriptions provide a limited view of the general capability of *Intercultural understanding*. They do not encompass a focus on developing understandings of the complexities of one's own and other cultures and their interrelationships. Stronger emphasis should also be given to historical events and people who have contributed to the development of the diversity of Australian identities and to notions of social inclusion, social cohesion and community harmony.

The draft history curriculum presents culture as static and exotic rather than as dynamic and complex. The complex nature of "culture", including complexities in defining the term, should be acknowledged and posited for debate and discussion in the content descriptions, with students contributing their own understanding of this notion. The content descriptions and elaborations could provide additional details to guide teachers to support students in exploring and developing understandings about the complex nature of culture and cultural diversity within Australia and internationally.

The document requires more guidance for teachers in selecting depth studies based upon the backgrounds of their students. For example, in *Depth Study 4 – The Ancient World*, Ancient Persia would be a relevant choice for schools with high numbers of refugee and migrant students from Afghanistan, Iraq and Iran.

Additionally, the document fails to incorporate an approach to the study of history which promotes a sense of "belonging" in a culturally diverse society. Greater emphasis should also be given to reinforcing students' identities as Australians (or as international students studying in Australia). This could be achieved by, for example, highlighting contributions of individuals and groups from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds to shaping Australia as a nation. There should be a stronger focus on the historical events surrounding migrant settlement in Australia and the contribution these communities have made to the development of Australia as a multicultural nation.

> 7   Please identify any content that you believe should not be included in the Australian Curriculum that is currently included, and give reasons for your selection.

Some language used in the draft history document may promote discrimination and stereotypes. For example, the use of the term "New Australians" is inappropriate as an organiser. Alternative terms should be used where language may be considered racist or stereotypical (e.g., the sub-heading "New Australians" could be changed to "Migration", "History of cultural diversity", etc.)

> 8   Please provide any additional comments you would like to make about the content descriptions.

The inclusion of *Literacy* – and to some extent, *Language* – as a discrete strand within the English curriculum document, though not for the other three learning areas, is

problematic, and could be interpreted to suggest that English teachers alone will be expected to assume the bulk of the responsibility for teaching literacy and language skills for all learning areas.

Scope for describing the progression of learning subject specific language and literacy skills must be incorporated into the content descriptions for each learning area. A global statement about the language skills and requirements might be included as a separate heading in the *Preface* to each year level and, additionally, incorporated into the curriculum focus descriptions for the three "broad year groupings" delineated in the *Organisation* section of the draft mathematics, science and history documents, as follows:
- Years K-2: typically students from 5 to 8 years of age
- Years 3-6: typically students from 8 to 12 years of age
- Years 7-10: typically students from 12 to 15 years of age.

These subject specific language and literacy skills should be reflected in the achievement standards for each year level also.

The broad year groupings listed above could also provide a useful organising tool for the incorporation of other of the general capabilities and cross-curriculum dimensions into the content of the learning areas, and for the articulation of EAL/D learner pathways into the mainstream curriculum learning areas.

Content elaborations

13   How can the elaborations be further improved to better illustrate the content descriptions?

If retained, it must be made more explicit to teachers that the content elaborations are intended to exemplify aspects of the mandatory content and are not mandatory in themselves. The content descriptions should express and encompass more clearly the subject matter to be taught at each year level within each learning area without relying on the content elaborations to do this.

Rather than simply reiterating and exemplifying learning area content, these content elaborations might be used to illustrate how knowledge, skills and understandings from the general capabilities and cross-curriculum dimensions can be incorporated into the curriculum. For example, the specific language and literacy demands of particular content descriptors might be foregrounded in these elaborations, or advice about providing pathways for students entering the mainstream curriculum at different stages with different levels of English language proficiency (i.e., EAL/D learners) as well as other students who might not have reached prerequisite year level achievement standards (e.g., students with special learning needs) could be provided, along with links to relevant support documents for these groups of learners.

Achievement standards

18   Please provide any other comments you would like to make about the draft achievement standards.

The achievement standards should also iterate and reflect the subject specific language and literacy skills of each year level in each learning area.

The achievement standards for all learning areas have been developed on the basis that students start school in Kindergarten with an age-appropriate level of oral proficiency in Standard Australian English and continue to progress through to year 10. Significant numbers of EAL/D learners in Australian schools in all year levels are still developing basic proficiency in English. The achievement standards do not allow teachers to assess and report accurately on EAL/D student progress in learning English.

Similarly, the broad A-E descriptors are designed for speakers of Standard Australian English. They do not allow teachers to report accurately on the developing English language proficiency of EAL/D learners.

The achievement standards across all four learning areas do not reflect the broader understandings expected at each year level from the incorporation of general capabilities and cross-curriculum dimensions. Specific reference should be made to aspects of the general capabilities and cross-curriculum dimensions in the achievement standards.

The achievement standards, particularly for those students entering the Australian school system in later years of schooling, will be extremely difficult for EAL/D learners to meet. Provision of appropriate resources and adoption of effective pedagogies are critical factors in teaching and learning though ESL. There must be some acknowledgement within the documents of the types of support, modified curriculum and alternative assessment strategies available for EAL/D students who do not attain the relevant achievement standards specified for their year level.

Finally, in order to provide guidance for teachers of EAL/D learners in Intensive English settings and ESL transition courses whose students will enter the curriculum at different stages, an indication of the prior learning requirements of knowledge, skills and understanding, and subject specific language and literacy skills, should be provided. In other words, instead of (or as well as) being framed as a summative assessment (i.e., "By the end of Year 6 …"), an overview of prerequisite knowledge and skills should be incorporated in the *Preface* of the subsequent year level (e.g., "When they enter Year 7, it is expected that students will be able to …")

> **20**   How can the work samples be improved so that they better illustrate and exemplify the achievement standards?

The inclusion of EAL/D student work samples illustrating different levels of English language proficiency would assist mainstream teachers to identify EAL/D learners and address their specific language learning needs, and would promote a clearer understanding of the distinction between achievement standards for content knowledge and skills and English language development.

The digital format of the curriculum documents will allow teachers to access these additional resources via hyperlinks. Extension of the online interface through the inclusion of EAL/D resources will enhance opportunities for teacher access to support materials at point of need.

Structure of the curriculum

> 22   Please provide any suggestions you have for improvements to the organisation of the learning area(s).

A common description of EAL/D learners should be reinstated in the *Organisation* section of each learning area document (following the *Implications for teaching and learning* section, as per the English document), as follows:

> *Learners of English as an additional language or dialect (EAL/D)*
> Many students in Australian schools are learners of English as an additional language or dialect (EAL/D). These students come from diverse backgrounds and include migrants, refugees, international students and Australian-born learners who use a language or dialect other than Standard Australian English as their primary mode of communication, as well as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who speak traditional Indigenous languages, creoles and Aboriginal English as their primary mode of communication. EAL/D learners enter Australian schools at different ages, different stages of schooling and at different stages of English language learning. They have varying educational backgrounds in their first languages and may have had significant disruption to their learning or experienced torture and trauma.
>
> While acknowledging and valuing the languages and cultural backgrounds and addressing the range of experiences of EAL/D learners and their specific learning needs, the broad objectives of the *Australian Curriculum: English* (… *mathematics / science / history*) will be ultimately the same for all students. EAL/D learners require additional time, support, targeted and explicit teaching and exposure to English before reaching the expectations outlined in the *Australian Curriculum: English* (… *mathematics / science / history*) and will come to this achievement in a variety of ways. Teachers need to devise and implement appropriate teaching and learning strategies and assessment practices for EAL/D students in their classrooms.

In addition to the reinstatement of these statements in all learning area documents, ACTA proposes that the following section entitled *Subject specific language and literacy* be incorporated into each learning area document (between the *Implications for teaching and learning* and *English as an additional language or dialect (EAL/D)* sections), as follows:

English
    Subject specific language and literacy

As well as being responsible for content teaching, the English teacher is responsible for the teaching and learning of the subject specific language and literacy of the English curriculum.

The genres and language features typically valued in subject English include: the narrative, response and report genres; the use of complex sentences where circumstances of time, manner or place are foregrounded (e.g., "<u>Stumbling through the door,</u> he collapsed in a heap …"); the combination of past, present and future tenses in the one text (e.g., "He <u>asked</u> his friend '<u>Will</u> you <u>be coming</u> or <u>are</u> you too busy?' "); descriptive language and evaluative language. The language demands of the curriculum are highlighted throughout the document and hyperlinked to further explanations and resources to support the teacher.

Mathematics
Subject specific language and literacy
As well as being responsible for content teaching, the mathematics teacher is responsible for the teaching and learning of the subject specific language and literacy of the mathematics curriculum.

The genres and language features typically valued in mathematics include: reading written problems and the instructional genres; the use of ellipsis, (e.g., "convert your age to days, then (convert your age to) hours, (then convert your age to) minutes and finally (convert your age to) seconds"; the use of multiple synonyms (e.g., "subtract", "take away", "minus"); imperatives (e.g., "<u>circle</u> the correct answer"); passive voice (e.g., "if 7 <u>is taken from</u> 10 …"); nominalisations (e.g., "product", "quotient"); technical terminology (e.g., "digits". "lowest common denominator") including the use of common words which have a specific meaning in a maths context (e.g. "<u>find</u> the value of x" requires more than searching, it implies problem solving); use of metaphorical language to express mathematics concepts and process. The language demands of the curriculum are highlighted throughout the document and hyperlinked to further explanations and resources to support the teacher

Science
Subject specific language and literacy
As well as being responsible for content teaching, the science teacher is responsible for the teaching and learning of the subject specific language and literacy of the science curriculum.

The genres and language features typically valued in science include: the report and the explanatory genres (e.g., "the water cycle"); the use of the passive voice (e.g., "clouds <u>are formed</u> …"); nominalisations (e.g. "sedimentation", "condensation"); imperatives (e.g., "<u>heat</u> the test tube"); technical terms including the use of common words which have a specific meaning in a science context (e.g., the term "attraction" is likely to mean something different in a science classroom than it does in an English classroom; "<u>drawing</u> a conclusion" is different from "<u>drawing</u> a picture" in a visual arts lesson, etc.) The language demands of the science curriculum are highlighted throughout the document and hyperlinked to further explanations and resources to support the teacher.

History

Subject specific language and literacy

As well as being responsible for content teaching, the history teacher is responsible for the teaching and learning of the subject specific language and literacy of the history curriculum.

The genres and language features typically valued in history include: the historical recount and discursive genres; the complex use of past tenses and use of modals (e.g., "life in Ancient Greece would have been very different …"); hypothesising language (e.g., "If I had been a slave in Ancient Rome, I would have …"); complex nominal groups (e.g., "the temple dedicated to an ancient local goddess named Athena was respected throughout the Mediterranean"). The language demands of the curriculum are highlighted throughout the document and hyperlinked to further explanations and resources to support the teacher.

The cultural diversity of learners is reflected in the introductory material in each learning area in a very limited way. ACTA recommends that the following paragraphs are inserted as the conclusion to the *Implications for teaching and learning* section in each document:

Each teacher must also teach the skills required to complete classroom tasks successfully. Students from many cultural backgrounds and those who have had minimal or disrupted education will need instruction and guidance as to how to learn effectively through the adoption of those strategies and approaches which are valued in Australian classrooms (e.g., cooperative group work, expressing opinions, asking questions, etc.) This is best achieved whilst concurrently understanding and incorporating the variety of learning styles and strategies which students bring with them into the classroom.

Finally, teachers must ensure that the cultural and linguistic resources of the diverse student population are incorporated through: the use of resources and texts which are representative of their students' cultural and linguistic diversity, and of the cultural and linguistic diversity of the wider Australian community; explicit recognition and use of the cultural and linguistic experiences which learners bring to the classroom; and through an understanding of the different conceptual frameworks through which knowledge in the English (… mathematics / science / history) learning area may be constructed.

24   Please provide any further comments.

The importance of oral communication and oral language in learning is not reflected in the introductory statements in the documents. The importance of oral interaction in the development of reasoning skills and problem solving strategies in mathematics, and as a process of investigation and inquiry in science and history, should be emphasised in the introduction to each learning area, and should also be reflected in the content descriptions and elaborations.

25   The Rationale and Aims of the learning area(s) provide a clear foundation and direction for the curriculum.

ACTA recommends that a reference to "subject specific language and literacy skills" be inserted at the conclusion of the second sentence in the first paragraph of the *Rationale* in the mathematics document, as follows:

[…] The *Australian Curriculum: mathematics* provides students with essential mathematical skills and knowledge in number and algebra, measurement and geometry, and statistics and probability, and subject specific language and literacy skills.

ACTA recommends that a reference to "subject specific language and literacy skills" be inserted into the first sentence in the second paragraph of the *Rationale* in the science document, as follows:

The *Australian Curriculum: science* provides opportunities for students to develop understandings about science and its processes, the scope of its contributions to our culture and society, and its applications in our daily lives, along with subject specific language and literacy skills. […]

More prominence should be given to the diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds of students in the *Rationale* for each learning area. This is significant in terms of student engagement and inclusion. Students must be able to see themselves in the curriculum and feel welcome to make contributions from the standpoint of their own range of complex and diverse experiences. ACTA recommends the inclusion of statements such as " … to acknowledge the diversity of the students who will access this curriculum" and "to equip students for the world in which they will live" in the *Rationale* statements for each learning area, and particularly in English and history when exploring issues related to world cultures and diversity within Australia.

General capabilities

37   Please provide any further comments you would like to make on the incorporation of general capabilities into the Australian Curriculum.

ACTA notes ACARA's commitment to provide "[l]iteracy, numeracy and ICT continua [which] will inform curriculum development in all learning areas". It is essential that these continua are developed, published and made available for consultation prior to the finalisation of the Phase 1 learning area documents in order that the documents reflect a consistent progression of knowledge, skills and understanding in these general capability areas.

ACTA also notes ACARA's commitment "to review the draft English, mathematics, science and history curriculum to ensure that there is strong and coherent inclusion of the general capabilities and cross-curriculum dimensions in the final curriculum". A scope and sequence of learning for other of the general capabilities should similarly be developed and published prior to the finalisation of the learning area documents. A complete overview of all ten general capabilities is required so that relevant and

accurate guidelines and pointers can be embedded within the content descriptions and elaborations in each learning area in order to reflect a consistent progression of knowledge, skills and understanding in those capabilities across the learning areas.

The inclusion of the general capability *Literacy* is strongly endorsed. It reflects the need for a shared understanding of literacy at a time when globalisation and technology are rapidly changing the notion of what it is to be literate and expanding the literacy demands for young people. It also reflects the important role of schools in developing literacy skills in our culturally and linguistically diverse student population. All students benefit from explicit and systematic teaching of literacy skills across the curriculum. However, literacy skills cannot be developed or built on without a knowledge of the language structures and features that are required to create and respond to the broad range of texts and language forms and features which students are expected to read, respond to and compose in each of the learning areas. Currently the mathematics, science and history documents do not provide sufficient guidance to teachers about the language and literacy skills their students require. It is essential that each of the learning area documents clearly identifies and describes the subject specific language and literacy demands of the learning area.

Additionally, an inconsistent interpretation of literacy appears across the learning area documents. In the mathematics document literacy is interpreted as the language of mathematics and written texts only. In science, the definition broadens and becomes a way of describing the range of ways of communicating in, and interpreting the language of science. The mathematics and science documents do not include any reference to the use of new communication technologies or multimedia which is included in the English and history documents. It is recommended that a consistent definition of and rationale for literacy be provided in each curriculum document in addition to listing the literacy requirements of each learning area.

The inclusion of the general capability *Numeracy* is strongly endorsed. However, stronger emphasis must be given to the development of subject specific language and literacy skills within this general capability, such as an understanding of the use of metaphorical language to refer to numeracy concepts and processes within the learning areas (e.g., "the healthy food pyramid").

The inclusion of the general capability *Intercultural understanding* is strongly endorsed. It reflects the need for a renewed emphasis on developing intercultural understanding within the culturally and linguistically diverse Australian context and internationally. It also reflects the importance of a strong focus on the role of schools in developing young people as responsible and active citizens who have a well-developed ability to live together and embrace opportunities that arise within a diverse society. *Intercultural understanding*, which aims to develop in students a deep understanding of themselves and others and to recognise Australia's diversity as one of the nation's greatest strengths, is essential to the development of a healthy civil society.

There are, however, significant issues in this general capability that need to be addressed in the Australian Curriculum development process. In the first place, the Australian Curriculum has failed to incorporate *Intercultural understanding* in all four

documents. Of the four curriculum areas, intercultural understanding is foregrounded in the English and history documents only and, in each case, the explanation and subsequent reflection in the content descriptions and elaborations is limited.

An underlying issue is the degree to which intercultural understanding is the aim of the general capability. Where it is included, the emphasis within the content strands reflects a focus on understanding "culture" through a study of "other" cultures. The view of culture presented is one of culture as static and exotic rather than a concept of culture as an ever-changing and interactional process, requiring exploration through engagement with others and conceptually. Understanding the complexities of one's own and other cultures and their interrelationships is vital to the role the Australian Curriculum plays in contributing to a socially cohesive-society that respects and appreciates cultural, linguistic, social and religious diversity. In *The Shape of the Australian Curriculum* (May 2009), the National Curriculum Board stated that this general capability would be specifically covered in such a way as to enable "students … to work and communicate with those from different cultures and backgrounds … and to work in harmony within and across cultures …" This proposed aspect of *Intercultural understanding* is not evident in the current draft Australian Curriculum documents. In this respect, the documents also ignore the increasing numbers of international students present in and contributing to the cultural life of Australian schools and communities.

Further development of the scope and sequence of the *Intercultural understanding* capability in particular is required in order for students' knowledge and skills to be adequately addressed.

In addition to this, there is minimal acknowledgement of the range of EAL/D learners' cultural and linguistic backgrounds within the curriculum documents. References to Asian and Aboriginal cultures do not adequately reflect all students' backgrounds and capabilities. It would be more inclusive to suggest that, in choosing materials and texts, teachers should acknowledge and endeavour to connect with the range of cultural backgrounds and capabilities of the students in their classrooms *as well as* Asian and Indigenous cultures in particular.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and languages are particularly important but there is a need to acknowledge all cultures in Australia. Cultural and linguistic diversity and Australian multiculturalism, not just the cultures of the school, need to be valued and explored in addition to our positioning within Asia and the Pacific.

Cross-curriculum dimensions

41   Please provide any further comments you would like to make on the incorporation of the cross curriculum dimensions into the Australian Curriculum.

As above, ACTA notes ACARA's commitment "to review the draft English, mathematics, science and history curriculum to ensure that there is strong and coherent inclusion of the general capabilities and cross-curriculum dimensions in the final curriculum". The statements for each of the cross-curriculum dimensions and a

scope and sequence for learning should similarly inform the content descriptions and elaborations in each learning area.

Despite the recognition of "the histories, cultures, traditions and languages of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island students" within the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander dimensions* section of the cross-curricular dimensions, there appears to be no overt recognition that there will be a significant proportion of EAL/D learners within the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cohort, including speakers of creoles and Aboriginal English as well as traditional Indigenous languages.

The inclusion of *Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia* is strongly endorsed. Given Australia's proximity to Asia, and the endeavour to cater to international students from Asia in particular within the Australian education system, it seems reasonable to expect that the Australian Curriculum include a focus on developing a deep understanding of the region, including Australia's connection to it. However, the definition of Asia is unclear. The Australian Curriculum should clearly define Asia and refer to it consistently throughout all learning area documents. At present, the treatment of *Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia* in all learning areas does not allow for students to develop a deep understanding of the region, including Australia's connection to it.

In addition, the focus on Asia should be extended to include "Asia and the Pacific".

The current draft curriculum fails to position Australia as part of Asia. It reflects a focus on understanding Asia through a study of "other" cultures without any focus on the impact of Asia on Australia through the processes of immigration and increasing international student enrolments. For instance, in the draft English document, there is mention (in year 7) of investigating the impact of English as a language in Asia but not on the exploration of the changing nature of English in Australia as a result of immigration.

Also absent from the curriculum is a focus on engaging and building strong relationships with Asia.

Digital layout

44   How can the layout of the Australian Curriculum consultation website be improved to enable easier access and navigation?

A supplementary EAL/D document that describes key stages in English language learning for students whose first language is not English and which demonstrates the "bridge" into each of the Australian Curriculum documents for EAL/D learners should be accessible from the Australian Curriculum home page and linked from within each curriculum document.

Additionally, in order to provide guidance for teachers of EAL/D learners in Intensive English settings and ESL transition courses whose students will enter the mainstream curriculum at different stages, a cumulative overview of the learning requirements of knowledge, skills and understanding, and subject specific language and literacy skills,

for each year level in each learning area, should be compiled and provided in the EAL/D document.

Along with this supplementary EAL/D document, information and advice about EAL/D learners, English language proficiency levels and ESL pathways and programs also needs to be embedded within the learning area documents (e.g., through the use of hyperlinks, within the *Organisation* and *Overview* sections of the documents, and in content descriptions and elaborations) for the guidance and convenience of mainstream teachers. There is great potential for an online document to have links to the supplementary EAL/D document and related resources to provide advice to mainstream teachers who are drawing on different parts of the curriculum documents in their planning for EAL/D learners.

There should also be advice for mainstream teachers to assist them in identifying whether their students are EAL/D learners or not, and, if they, their level of English language proficiency, so that they will know to follow the relevant links and utilise the resources which will assist them.

Extension of the online interface through the inclusion on the website of additional Australian Curriculum resources for EAL/D learners in a digital format (e.g., a supplementary EAL/D document, EAL/D student work samples for each learning area, etc.) which are hyperlinked to and from the learning area documents, as well as additional links to external curriculum frameworks and assessment materials, will enhance opportunities for teacher access to support materials at point of need.

World class curriculum

53 Please provide any further comments you have on the draft Australian Curriculum (eg strengths, priority areas for improvement).

In order to achieve Points 47, 48, 49 and 52 in the survey in particular, the Australian Curriculum documents must demonstrate a cutting-edge understanding of the impact of increasing globalisation on languages and modes of communication, on the complexities of cultural transmission and cross-fertilisation within and across national borders, and on the optimal and most ethical strategies for the teaching of English as a global language. Additionally, the draft Australian Curriculum as it currently stands does not sufficiently cater to the needs and abilities of students who are learning English as an additional language or dialect (EAL/D). More explicit and comprehensive guidelines for the incorporation of the general capability of *Intercultural understanding* and the teaching of EAL/D students in all learning areas will enhance both the quality and the international marketability of the Australian Curriculum.

There are significant issues in the draft Australian Curriculum documents concerning the recognition and acknowledgement of the diversity of learners in Australian classrooms. While there is some recognition of cultural and linguistic diversity, this is limited and not reflected consistently in all four learning area documents. Cultural and linguistic diversity is a defining characteristic of Australia and a feature of most

schools and includes migrants, children of migrants as well as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. According to currently available statistical data, almost 30 percent of students in Australian schools are from language backgrounds other than English (LBOTE). However, this average does not reflect the reality in many metropolitan schools where LBOTE students comprise the majority of the school population (up to 96 percent in some schools) or in remote Australian schools where up to 100 percent of enrolled students may speak a variety of creole or a traditional Indigenous language. Additionally, currently available national data on students' language backgrounds does not include the LBOTE (or EAL/D) status of many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

In addition to limited acknowledgement of cultural and linguistic diversity, the documents fail to recognise the complexity of this group. If the Australian Curriculum is to cater for the needs of all students, further work is required to ensure that the diversity of learners is more fully acknowledged in all learning areas. This acknowledgement must include a more detailed description of the diversity of Australian students in the *Rationale* section of each curriculum document. This will assist teachers to recognise and build on experiences and knowledge that students from all backgrounds bring to each learning area.

ACTA notes that there is currently no nationally agreed definition of EAL/D learners, and that ACARA acknowledges the need for such a definition and technical specifications to facilitate its implementation. ACTA supports the adoption of a nationally agreed definition of EAL/D learners, and has undertaken substantial work and consultation in the development of such a definition and technical specifications to assist its implementation.

Finally, ACTA would welcome the opportunity to work with ACARA in the development and implementation of a supplementary EAL/D document, to provide EAL/D work samples illustrating levels of English language proficiency, and to undertake an environmental scan and audit of existing state and territory ESL curriculum frameworks, syllabuses, program materials and assessment tools, as well as a survey of Australian and overseas work on second language acquisition and first language maintenance in particular.