



8 Galali Pl
Aranda
ACT 2614
22nd November, 2008

Professor Barry McGaw
Chair of National Curriculum Board
PO Box 177,
Carlton South,
Victoria 3053.

Cc: Tony McKay, Deputy Chair
Members of the National Curriculum Board

Dear Barry,

I am writing on behalf of the members of the Australasian Association for Progressive and Alternative Education. We are people who are passionate about the value and place of diversity in education and the central role of learner choice and responsibility for their own learning.

Our members have been following the development and discussion of the National Curriculum with keen interest and some concern. To give you a broad outline of our position I am including a copy of AAPAE's submission to the Senate Inquiry into the Schools Assistance Bill 2008.

We note that the discussion paper, *The Shape of the National Curriculum: A Proposal for Discussion states*

All states and territories currently have processes by which schools can be accredited to offer something other than their relevant state or territory curriculum....Such provisions could continue in the presence of a national curriculum though that will remain a matter for the states and territories' registration authorities.

Recently the Federal Minister (Age, 11/11/08) attempted to reassure the educational communities that the national curriculum will accommodate alternatives such as Steiner and Montessori programmes, but she has asked the curriculum board to review other models. Before this has happened we are concerned that the Minister has already insisted that the national curriculum will be compulsory, and non-negotiable, we "must accept the case for transparency and accountability across the whole of Australia's school system."

(<http://mediacentre.dewr.gov.au/mediacentre/Gillard/Releases/2008CurriculumCorporationConference.htm>)

We are assuming that the members of AAPAE fall into the category of 'the other' and we request a meeting with you or indications of any other means of communication, to discuss the process, the timeframe and ways we can play an active role in any review process.

Yours sincerely,

Cecelia Bradley
(President, AAPAE)

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8 Galali Pl
Aranda ACT 2614
31st October 2008

John Carter
Committee Secretary
Senate Education, Employment and Workplace Relations Committee
Department of the Senate
PO Box 6100 Canberra ACT 2600
Email: eewr.sen@aph.gov.au

**A SUBMISSION on behalf of AUSTRALASIAN ASSOCIATION for
PROGRESSIVE and ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION**

RE: Senate Inquiry into Schools Assistance Bill 2008

Dear John,

The Members of the Australasian Association for Progressive and Alternative Education (AAPAE) are passionate about the value and place of diversity in education and the central role of learner choice and responsibility for their own learning.

We welcome the Government's guarantee to maintain the current levels of funding for the next 4 years and hope that the planned Review will enable the development of funding which focuses on the needs of the individual, provides equity of access and is not dependent on requirements contrary to the philosophy of our diverse school communities.

We continue to be concerned that the Government has retained and increased the National Performance and Transparency Requirements which are part of the Funding Agreements between the Government and the Schools. Participation in national student assessments and reports to parents which include an assessment of the student's achievement against any available national standards and relative to the student's peer group at the school are contrary to the philosophies of many of our schools. We value the development of the individual in caring, co-operative, democratic learning environments. We seek policies and implementation of assessment and accountability processes which recognize individual difference and learning styles, enable collaboration and co-operation rather than competition and which reduce rather than increase the comparisons between students and schools which often results in low self esteem, constricted learning and fearful parents and communities.

One of the most recent international voices comes from Former Director of Institute School Education at the University of London, Peter Mortimore who was reported in the Australian, Oct 27th as saying that testing backfires, with teachers

teaching to the test, spending an inordinate amount of time rehearsing the test, with the result that students were bored by their education and turned off. In the time that the testing system had been introduced, Britain has progressively slipped in testing by the OECD, and it performs well below Australia. The Federal Government's policy requiring schools to publicly report their results in national tests was described as macho and populist and overlooks the critical issue of the quality of teachers. Professor Mortimore said that Australia should look to Finland, which consistently tops the OECD tests, for inspiration rather than emulating policies that have failed in England [and United States, my addition]. Finland runs comprehensive schools, with no testing or streaming of students by ability and struggling students are identified and helped before they fall too far behind. Professor Mortimore said that key to the success in Finland was the very high standard of teacher education.

AAPAE would add to that the central importance of the quality of the relationship between the co- learners.

The requirement to implement a national curriculum is also of considerable concern as we seek the continued right for our schools to value and acknowledge explicitly what each learner brings to the table through implementation of diverse, flexible curricula including, emergent, negotiated and natural learning. When curriculum is viewed as " experience" teachers are co-learners with their students, responding and wondering together about their world and taking action in it. As teachers we are learning about the child, who they are, their aspirations, their interests their ways of knowing and understanding and building from those to support and scaffold the child's learning in ways that are relevant, useful, timely, meaningful, engaging and inspiring. A national curriculum has the potential to seriously distract us from this process as the focus switches to ensure that external requirements are met rather than those of the learner whose sense of themselves as a self-directed learner who loves learning and will continue to learn throughout their life.

Thanks you for considering this submission.

Yours sincerely,
Cecelia Bradley
President, Australasian Association for Progressive and Alternative Education.