

# **Submission of the National Alternative Dispute Resolution Advisory Council on the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority's *Civics and Citizenship Draft Australian Curriculum***

## **Dispute Resolution in Civics and Citizenship Education**

Dispute resolution is fundamental to the operation of a civil society. Dispute resolution knowledge, understanding and skills have an important place in social, political and occupational life. NADRAC considers that the fundamental importance of dispute resolution makes it eminently suitable for inclusion in the *Years 3-10 Australian Curriculum – Civics and Citizenship (Civics and Citizenship Curriculum)*. The benefits of focused learning of dispute resolution will contribute to the democratic and diverse nature of Australian society.

The National Alternative Dispute Resolution Advisory Council (NADRAC) welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the draft curriculum materials for the *Civics and Citizenship Curriculum*. NADRAC has previously provided comment to the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) on the Draft Shape of the *Australian Curriculum: Civics and Citizenship*.

NADRAC is delighted to see that dispute resolution has been incorporated into the current draft curriculum. The inclusion of opportunities for students to develop skills in conflict resolution in the curriculum will assist young Australians' need to emerge from school with the knowledge, understanding and skills to enrich civic life in Australian society, through active and informed participation. NADRAC is additionally pleased to note that specific section in the Year 10 curriculum outline about learning formal processes to resolve conflicts, including conciliation and arbitration. This kind of focused learning of dispute resolution will contribute to the democratic and diverse nature of Australian society.

In addition to these advancements, NADRAC would like to reiterate consideration of including the following amendments to the *Civics and Citizenship Curriculum*:

### **Civics definition**

NADRAC encourages the extension of the definition of 'civics' to cover the concept of civics as including the constructive resolution of disputes at all levels of social interaction. Having sound knowledge, skills and understanding of how to manage personal interactions forms the groundwork for how individuals interact with each other (personally and collectively) and with institutions at local, regional and global levels.

### **Direction of rationale and aims for civics and citizenship education**

It is NADRAC's view that the rationale for the *Civics and Citizenship Curriculum* should, in addition to those concepts identified by ACARA, draw on the intrinsic role that dispute resolution plays in all aspects of a civil society. Most devices for civic order are intended to deal with the consequences of conflict and dispute. Society has an interest in emphasising personal responsibility to try and resolve dispute or find assistance to do so by use of dispute resolution resources.

## **Including dispute resolution in the proposed organisation and structure of civics and citizenship education**

NADRAC is pleased that ACARA has identified a role for dispute resolution in *Civics and Citizenship Curriculum*, by inclusion of 'conflict resolution' and other interpersonal and social skills as part of the personal and social general capability. However, NADRAC is of the view that dispute resolution warrants greater focus in the *Civics and Citizenship Curriculum*. This is due to the fundamental nature of dispute resolution as a driver of both free action and order in a democratic community.

NADRAC considers that the two strands of the *Civics and Citizenship Curriculum* should include education about dispute resolution. In the knowledge and understanding strand, students should develop knowledge about the different dispute resolution processes available, as well as an understanding of how the different processes work and the circumstances in which they may be appropriate. In the skills strand, NADRAC also sees benefit in including dispute resolution education. To resolve a dispute involves skills which must be learned, acquired and reinforced like other skills.

A more focused and explicit incorporation of dispute resolution into the *Civics and Citizenship Curriculum* will assist to achieve the aims of the curriculum by enabling students to fully participate in civic life as active citizens who are empowered to manage and resolve the disputes they encounter.

### **Further advice NADRAC could provide to ACARA**

Below are some areas on which NADRAC is willing to provide further advice to ACARA in relation to the inclusion of dispute resolution in the *Civics and Citizenship Curriculum*. NADRAC is willing to consider any other requests for assistance ACARA chooses to make of it.

- Make *Your guide to dispute resolution* available by link on the state and territory Department of Education websites.
  - *Your guide to dispute resolution* is a resource to help ordinary Australians understand a bit more about alternative dispute resolution (ADR).
- Provide, through the NADRAC website, resource materials on dispute resolution for each period of Citizenship study involving dispute resolution, consistent with the curriculum.
- Provide advice on the preparation of a skeleton segment on dispute resolution for school teaching materials.
- Link teachers and curriculum designers with dispute resolution bodies.