



06.07.2021

Australian Curriculum,
Assessment and
Reporting Authority
(ACARA)

engagement@acara.edu.au

CC

Helen Champion
Robyn Carmody

Dear ACARA,

Re: Australian Curriculum Review consultation

NAVA welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Australian Curriculum Review consultation and encourages ACARA to implement our recommendations to build on the strengths of the existing national curriculum, improve its accessibility for classroom teachers and deepen engagement and knowledge of the visual arts for students.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The National Association for the Visual Arts leads advocacy, policy and action for an Australian contemporary arts sector that's ambitious and fair. Our community of over 50,000 Members, subscribers, friends and followers consists of artists, arts workers, arts organisations, and arts lovers, including business and philanthropy.

We work hard to achieve recognition and respect for artists – for their practice, for their work and for their rights. We do this because the voice of the artist offers Australia a deep perspective on the past, a vital perspective on today, and a compelling perspective on the future. We believe that the contemporary arts offer rigorous, ethical and valuable approaches to rethinking our personal, social, environmental and political priorities.

For nearly 20 years, NAVA has been part of vigorous advocacy campaigns for the mandating of visual education in all schools around the country. In 2008 NAVA joined with other peak artform bodies and teacher organisations in the four other arts disciplines (drama, dance, media and music) to form the National Advocates for Arts Education (NAAE). As part of this network, NAVA played a key role providing expert advice at every stage of the development of the current national curriculum and acting as intermediary between our constituents and ACARA.

NAVA CURRICULUM CONSULTATIONS

NAVA took a leading role in coordinating a visual arts, craft and design response to this review, actively encouraging the arts community to add their voice via the ACARA survey and inviting people to get in touch via NAVA's email with feedback. NAVA hosted two sector consultations ahead of the 8 July deadline to ensure our response was as collaborative and representative as possible.

As a member of NAAE, NAVA contributed to and endorsed their response to this review. NAAE is the network of peak national professional arts and arts education associations across art forms, and advocates for a national curriculum which can be adopted or adapted to state, territory, sector, and school contexts to meet the needs of students across Australia and respect the epistemological, ontological, and pedagogical differences across and within The Arts.

On 2 June 2021, NAVA engaged the Art Gallery of South Australia's Neo Ambassadors, a committee of young people aged 13 to 17 living in South Australia with the support of April Phillips, Wiradjuri-Scottish visual artist, researcher and digital arts educator at Big hART. NAVA hosted a 1 hour online meeting with 5 students to discuss what they did and did not like about Visual Arts taught at school, what could be improved, what artists they learnt about or would like to learn about, and what they have learnt outside of school. The Neo Ambassadors' quotes are embedded in the strengths and opportunities section below.

On 17 June 2021, NAVA hosted an open Curriculum Consultation via Zoom for the visual arts and craft sector to discuss the changes, push for improvements and strategise on what's needed to support teachers to deliver this ambitious framework. We were heartened by the level of enthusiasm, engagement and expertise of the 188 participants.

The following strengths and opportunities were developed through NAVA's consultations with the visual arts, craft and design sector.

STRENGTHS

- Emphasis on process, play, experimentation and impacts as key components of visual arts practice.

"I'm really enjoying working with my own themes more and being able to experiment with media, rather than basing it off of I guess more technical skill again, and just exploring what art means to me and how I relate to it." AGSA Neo Ambassador

"In high school I really like exploring new mediums and experimenting with different things, as well as actually going through different planning processes with prototypes and improving the overall piece." AGSA Neo Ambassador

- Emphasis on listening to the voices of First Nations artists when students learn about cultural expressions, although this could be reinforced.
- Emphasis on responding to and including ALL artists and students, including those with disability.

"In the two and a half years that I've been studying art at high school, we've only ever learned about white male artists, which is really sad because my school prides itself on diversity and yet they don't teach it, which is really crappy." AGSA Neo Ambassador

- Exploration of the various roles of professional arts worker careers.

"I've definitely learned more about the application of art outside of schools, especially how, I guess, curating works, how exhibiting works and how the actual art market works, whereas they don't teach you that in school I feel, and I think it's something that should be taught." AGSA Neo Ambassador

- Classes are encouraged to visit art galleries.

“I did find the entire excursion very interesting because most of the time in year eight and nine, we were responding to artists.” AGSA Neo Ambassador

- References to regional and national collections.
- Literacy is explored as a way to respond to visual arts.

“When I'm choosing artists [for study as part of her folio], I usually like to look at how they interpret a theme, usually a theme that I like to associate with, or how they use a specific medium or their style...I like to know the backstory around their art.” AGSA Neo Ambassador

- Focus on artistic concepts from across times and living cultures.

“I felt like at school it was very much teaching you how to produce art, rather than teaching you the meaning of art. We don't really get taught about the culture, so I have to go and I guess, educate myself when I feel like it's something that I should know when I'm doing the art.” AGSA Neo Ambassador

- Introduced learning on identifying and understanding copyright and Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP).
- Activities that help students understand how to make ethical choices.
- Students encouraged to engage in self-assessment.

“I think that it will be really good if the art curriculum imitated what practicing artists actually do a bit more, and we had more of a chance to talk through our ideas and develop a more resolved body of work and then have the opportunity to actually exhibit that in some capacity.” AGSA Neo Ambassador

- References to resources that are co-created with First Nations people and groups.
- Emphasis on perspectives and inquiry-based learning.

AREAS REQUIRING FURTHER CONSIDERATION IN REFINING THE ARTS: VISUAL ARTS CURRICULUM

- Include guidelines to reinforce focus on teaching a diverse range of artists including local, living and First Nations artists.

“Something that I again think is lacking, is seeing more contemporary artists at school, looking at all the old ones is excellent because there's just so much history and diversity in it, but I think it's important to look at what's happening now as well.” AGSA Neo Ambassador

- Encourage teachers to invite local artists to speak to their work to ensure the artist's voice is represented and visible.

“It would be good if we could learn more from local artists in our community and actually maybe have them come in, because then we'd have the opportunity to actually speak to them and find out more about their work. Although I did have the opportunity to watch a presentation by Stelarc, when he was in Adelaide last year, he came to our school and he talked to us about his work and that was very interesting.”
AGSA Neo Ambassador

- Facilitate greater access for teachers (especially for primary school teachers) to online visual arts teaching resources to support the delivery of the curriculum. Resources could include lists of local artists, tips for engaging a diverse range of artists, help with materials management, more thorough work samples to help with marking, and an online portal of curriculum aligned resources, programs and events for visual arts education, similar to Education Services Australia's [Civics and Citizenship portal](#).

“With visual arts, I felt like it was very restricted in ways in primary school, I didn't get to explore materials or anything. It was like, okay, here's a teacher, and we're going to introduce a technique or a format, and we would get taught that and we would have to essentially grid copy and paste whatever our art teacher drew.” AGSA Neo Ambassador

“I feel I haven't had as much exposure to contemporary artists and smaller exhibitions, which I think I really would've liked.” AGSA Neo Ambassador

- Rephrase the use of unrelatable terms including changing ‘arts works’ to ‘artworks’, ‘First Nations Australians’ to ‘First Nations artists/peoples’, ‘viewpoints’ to ‘perspectives’, and ‘conventions’ to ‘styles’. When referring to First Nations artistic output, change ‘cultural expressions’ to ‘artworks’.
- Increase mentions of 3D and craft practice under the current elaborations as a guide for teachers in relation to the content descriptions.
- Facilitate greater access to the art practice of all artists, including those with disability, from CALD backgrounds, and the development of resources to demonstrate diverse creative practice.

“In the two and a half years that I've been studying art at high school, we've only ever learned about white male artists, which is really sad because my school prides itself on diversity and yet they don't teach it, which is really crappy.” AGSA Neo Ambassador

- Greater exploration of the various roles of professional arts worker careers including offering opportunities to exhibit.

“I haven't had much of a chance to exhibit work. There are people that I talked with and they don't understand the importance of art in our culture. I think we could do better to exhibit or show that importance in the school community at least. I wish there were ways that we could do that, especially since I specialise in installation, it's really hard for me to find a venue to install stuff.” AGSA Neo Ambassador

- Facilitate greater access to resources, storage and spaces.

“I often have to resort to making mock spaces or sculptures instead of installations because my school won't provide me with open art dedicated spaces. Whenever we do open style exhibitions, it's always either the gym or the concert hall foyer, we don't really have an art dedicated space. So I can plan all I like about installations, but I really can't actually install one because of the lack of space. The materials or equipment that I usually use are generally easy to find, and I try to keep it at a lower cost because my projects aren't funded.” AGSA Neo Ambassador

“My school has basically no storage whenever we do projects, so we just store them in the classrooms. And because of this, multiple works of mine have been broken by other students, which is really disappointing.” AGSA Neo Ambassador

“One of the biggest challenges is sharing a space, because our art class is a combination of two different art classes, of contemporary and methods. Since there's a lot of people in one classroom, it's hard to do your own thing sometimes.” AGSA Neo Ambassador

- Demonstrate applications of art practice in other areas such as health and community development.
- Support arts organisations/institutions to better provide meaningful and reliable education kits/programs that align more closely and consistently with the national curriculum links. NAVA is keen to work with ACARA and national institutions to help arts organisations release mapped curriculum documents with unique or aligned elaborations for all current and future kits/programs. This could be through the development of a shared template for arts organisations and institutions to use when creating kits/programs. The template could include a set of resources and a glossary that is consistent across all organisations.
- Support arts organisations/institutions in the preparation of detailed material when mapping to the new curriculum when rolled out.
- Support a national curriculum which reduces state-based differences (and the work required to respond to this in arts education programs).
- As per the written submission from the NAAE, NAVA also advocates for *Making* and *Responding* to remain as organising strands for The Arts and recommends that sub-strands are used to refine the intention of ‘Making’ within the curriculum. NAAE proposed the use of the strands and sub-strands of:
 - Strand 1. Making
 - Sub-strand - Creating as artist
 - Sub-strand - Presenting as artist
 - Strand 2. Responding (reflecting & critically analysing) as artist & audience.

NEXT STEPS

NAVA offers to continue to work with ACARA to provide industry advice and feedback on the continued refinement of the curriculum. This includes support for the re-drafting of the glossary and the Examples of Knowledge and Skills.

To support the delivery of the visual arts curriculum NAVA recommends expert knowledge to guide resources and content. We would like to see our national collecting institutions work with the national curriculum to ensure it aligns with the strength of our national visual arts identity.

Currently there is a lack of consistency across our institutions to meet the national curriculum with supporting evidence. The curriculum is more likely to be adopted and referenced when collecting institutions release mapped curriculum documents with unique or aligned elaborations for all current and future programs, educational offerings and tours. This work will serve as exemplary practice to support time poor teachers to deliver visual arts learning successfully in the classroom.

NAVA offers to collaborate with ACARA and national institutions to support arts organisations/institutions in better providing meaningful and reliable education kits/programs that align more closely and consistently with the national curriculum links.

NAVA suggests collaborating on developing a shared template for creating kits/programs that will help arts organisations release mapped curriculum documents with unique or aligned elaborations for all current and future kits/programs. The template could include a set of resources and a glossary that is consistent across all organisations.

Please do not hesitate to contact us for any further information we can provide.

Sincerely,



Penelope Benton
Executive Director



Leya Reid
Communications and Advocacy Manager