Submission to the 2014 Federal Government Review of the Australian Curriculum (part of the Coalition’s Students First policy) by Economics and Business Educators NSW

Economics and Business Educators NSW (EBE NSW) welcomes the opportunity to participate in the 2014 Federal Government’s Review of the Australian Curriculum by providing the following submission in response to the Review’s Terms of Reference in the context of the Australian Curriculum in Economics and Business and the Australian Curriculum in Civics and Citizenship.

As a long-established and well-respected professional teaching association representing teachers of Economics, Business Studies, Commerce and Legal Studies and as an affiliate member of Business Educators Australasia Inc., EBE NSW is ideally placed to provide comments in the context of the Australian Curriculum in Economics and Business and the Australian Curriculum in Civics and Citizenship.

“The curriculum shaping process followed by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) to ensure that the curriculum is balanced and offers students an appropriate degree of choice and diversity”

ACARA provided a number of opportunities during the curriculum shaping process for formal consultation with the profession.

A group of EBE NSW directors attended an ACARA National Forum on 1 June 2012, joining key stakeholders in the Australian Curriculum to discuss the ACARA Economics and Business Initial Advice Paper.

After consulting with members through a webinar presentation/feedback session (which was made available on the EBE NSW website), EBE NSW prepared a submission for ACARA on the ACARA Draft Shape of the Australian Curriculum: Economics and Business.

In 2013 EBE NSW held a webinar in order to consult with educators about the ACARA Draft Australian Curriculum: Economics and Business and prepared a survey for educators to complete. The webinar on the draft curriculum was made available on the EBE NSW website. Following this consultation process, EBE NSW submitted their response to the ACARA Draft Australian Curriculum: Economics and Business.
In addition, Mr Robert Randall, CEO of ACARA, was a keynote speaker at the 2013 Annual EBE NSW Conference and spoke on the “Australian Curriculum in Economics and Business – ACARA Update”.

EBE NSW also participated in an Australian Curriculum Economics-Business Reference Group formed by the Board of Studies NSW as part of its consultation process with regards to the Draft Shape of the Australian Curriculum: Economics and Business and the ACARA Draft Australian Curriculum: Economics and Business.

With regards to the Australian Curriculum in Civics and Citizenship, the EBE NSW President attended an ACARA National Forum on 19 March 2012, joining key stakeholders in the Australian Curriculum to discuss the ACARA Civics and Citizenship Initial Advice Paper. EBE NSW sought views about the ACARA Draft Shape of the Australian Curriculum: Civics and Citizenship and the ACARA Draft Australian Curriculum: Civics and Citizenship, and submitted responses to both of these documents to ACARA.

While EBE NSW appreciated the above opportunities provided by ACARA, we would have preferred to be more involved in the curriculum development process through regular meetings with ACARA which we believe would have enabled ACARA to gain greater insights into the views of the profession with regards to key issues in the draft curriculum documents and their implications for young people in schools.

“The process of curriculum development to be followed by the ACARA for the development and revision of all future curriculum content”

One driving force for teachers to respond to curriculum development processes is deep knowledge about the processes and the content in draft curriculum documents. We would have preferred more resources directed to ACARA to conduct more information and discussion sessions (both face to face and electronically) for teachers about their processes and the content in the draft curriculum documents. Some of the time during the consultation process could have been used more productively to engage more teachers in the consultation process.

Intense communication with teachers who will implement the curriculum in their classrooms is essential as curriculum is being developed and revised. Professional associations, like EBE NSW, are well placed to facilitate this communication as our members are teachers in schools and in daily contact with young people who will learn and study the curriculum. In particular our members have special expertise in how to teach knowledge and skills to young people and the level of depth suitable for different age groups.

An important aspect of any process in relation to curriculum development is an ongoing conversation between stakeholders about initial advice papers, shape papers and draft papers. Stakeholders should be listening intensely to each other. EBE NSW believes this aspect could be enhanced by making all submissions received about each stage of a particular curriculum development process available for the public to read on the ACARA website.
“The content in learning areas, cross curriculum priorities and general capabilities of the Australian Curriculum”

With regards to the Australian Curriculum in Economics and Business, EBE NSW endorses consumer and financial literacy as a centrepiece of the curriculum and critical to the realization of the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians. EBE NSW believes that the place of consumer and financial literacy could be strengthened in the curriculum with more explicit reference across the years to the content of the National Consumer and Financial Literacy Framework.

EBE NSW believes that the sequencing of the introduction and development of students’ understanding of key Economics and Business concepts should be carefully monitored to ensure that complex concepts are not introduced in years where students will not be able to “make meaning” of the concepts because they lack relevance to their lives.

With regards to the “General Capabilities” in the Australian Curriculum: Economics and Business, EBE NSW considers that overall they are suitable for the content in the curriculum. For example, activating the general capability of “critical and creative thinking” through developing “enterprising behaviours and capabilities...." and “an understanding of the ethical considerations that may be involved in making economic and business decisions...” to activate the general capability of “ethical understanding”. However, EBE NSW would prefer that the online commercial environment is made more explicit in the ICT description. This is a critical aspect of economic and business activity in the twenty first century and connects very well to young people and their experiences.

The representation of each of the Cross Curriculum Priorities in the curriculum could be further developed so they are made more explicit in the curriculum. Otherwise there is a danger that teachers will gloss over or ignore this critical component of the curriculum.

The Cross-Curriculum Priority, “Asia and Australia’s engagement with Asia” is very relevant to developing students’ Economic and Business knowledge and skills, as students learn about the growth of economies in Asia, doing business in the Asia region and the contribution of Asian economies to economic and business activity in Australia.

With regards to the Australian Curriculum: Civics and Citizenship, EBE NSW considers knowledge about a nation’s economy, the government’s role in it (for example, the choices it makes with relation to scarce resources through the federal budget process) and the responsibility of citizens to pay taxes to the government and rates to local councils as important principles that should inform the curriculum and be a focus of the curriculum more fully. Being an active and informed citizen means thinking critically about the economic challenges that face a nation and asking “what are our priorities and what are we willing to give up to ensure that we can dedicate resources to those priorities?” (Marri, 2012). After all, it is the citizens of Australia that have the power to elect the politicians that will manage the economy and a course in civics and citizenship should focus on developing informed electors who think critically about the government’s ability to manage the economy.
With regards to the “General Capabilities” in the Australian Curriculum: Civics and Citizenship, EBE NSW considers that overall they are suitable for the content in the curriculum. With regards to “Ethical understanding”, it is recommended that this be developed further in the curriculum with an emphasis on the ethical behaviour of governments and corporations as well as economic viability criteria.

With regards to the “Cross Curriculum Priorities” in the Australian Curriculum EBE NSW would like to see a more balanced coverage of these priorities throughout the curriculum and relevant parts highlighted (e.g. ATSIHC, AAEA, S) for teaching and programming purposes. There needs to be a clearer recognition of the important role that effective management of the economy has on improving sustainability.

“The ongoing monitoring, evaluation and review of curriculum content used by ACARA to ensure independence, rigour and balance in curriculum development”

Once a curriculum is released in its final form, teachers need adequate planning time, professional development and quality resources before they can effectively implement the curriculum in the classroom. Unrealistic implementation timelines that do not take these factors into account can impact negatively on student learning outcomes in the classroom. These supporting factors then need to remain in place on an ongoing basis once the curriculum is implemented. In addition, adequate pre-service teacher education related to the curriculum is essential. It is these important factors that will make a strong contribution to the “robustness” and “rigour” of the Australian Curriculum.

Professional associations, like EBE NSW, are uniquely positioned to work with government to deliver the above factors. Ongoing funding in this area can only prove to be a worthwhile investment that will ensure the goals of the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians are realized.

**Conclusion**

EBE NSW is committed to advocating for Economics and Business education with a focus on Civics and Citizenship for all students, and supporting teachers in providing high quality lessons in these areas. EBE’s greatest strength is its members – teachers in schools who are committed to their students and passionate about the curriculum. We welcome any further opportunities to provide feedback on the curriculum.

Joe Alvaro  
*President – Economics and Business Educators NSW*  
28 February 2014

**Reference**

Marri, A. (2012). My View: Get Students to Think Beyond the Numbers (Internet). USA: Columbia University  
(Accessed 28 February 2014)