



Australian Council for Health, Physical Education and Recreation

## **The ACHPER National Statement on the curriculum future of Health and Physical Education in Australia.**

**May 2009**

This statement has been developed by the Australian Council for Health, Physical Education and Recreation (ACHPER) National Working Group<sup>i</sup>. Publication of the statement follows consultation with ACHPER's membership through its State Branches, website and regular communications with members.

### **Why do we need a National Statement about the curriculum future of Health and Physical Education in Australia?**

The National Statement has been developed to:

- constructively contribute to the ongoing debates and developments relating to a National Curriculum and national approaches to curriculum in Australia;
- provide a timely and considered response to the new Federal government's policy proposals for education; and
- present proposals and recommendations that can be the basis of ongoing productive partnerships in policy and curriculum development.

The statement reflects ACHPER's commitment to the development and provision of Health and Physical Education (HPE)<sup>ii</sup> across all States and Territories and to establish HPE as a curriculum entitlement for all students in Australia.

Since coming to office, the Federal Labor government has confirmed its pre-election commitment to advance a National Curriculum. ACHPER wishes to work productively with Federal, State and Territory governments, curriculum authorities and other stakeholders to ensure a secure curriculum presence for HPE and to establish HPE as

a curriculum entitlement for all young Australians. ACHPER urges the Federal government to formally acknowledge that:

- HPE is the area of the curriculum that provides education for children to learn how to lead healthy lifestyles now and in the future; that is, lifestyles characterised by and recognising the importance of health and physical education and physical activity for physical, social, emotional and spiritual wellbeing;
- HPE is the area of the curriculum that is directly concerned with the development of skills, knowledge, understandings, values and attitudes that will counter so called lifestyle diseases that are widely acknowledged as representing an unprecedented threat to the health and economic future of Australia; and that
- HPE is the area of the curriculum that engages students in learning related to contemporary, adolescent health issues.

ACHPER is not seeking a highly regulative, prescriptive set of requirements relating to HPE curriculum. It is seeking national collaboration to secure enhanced and nationally comparable learning opportunities for all young Australians in the area of HPE and establish an agreed curriculum entitlement for all young Australians.

ACHPER acknowledges that delivery on a curriculum entitlement will only be achieved through collaborative and sustained advocacy by the many organisations and agencies who share ACHPER's belief that an educated nation, comprising active and healthy young people is the best investment we can make in their future. ACHPER has many long established and ongoing partnerships that have informed this statement and will be central to its advancement in policy and practice. ACHPER is committed to those ongoing partnerships and to fostering new collaborations that will assist in ensuring that the proposals and recommendations inherent in the national statement are enacted. ACHPER will continue to advocate and lobby for resources to achieve that.

## **Principles underpinning ACHPER's National Statement**

1. An educated nation, comprising active and healthy young people is the best investment that we can make for the future;
2. HPE should be a key element of a curriculum entitlement for all young Australians. This is in accordance with repeated international declarations that have called upon governments worldwide to make this invaluable commitment to children's education and through that, to their health and wellbeing<sup>iii</sup>;

3. HPE is an *educational* endeavour and experience. As such, it is fundamentally distinct from 'health', 'physical activity' and 'sport' but maintains a key relationship to each of these (see clarification points below);
4. The school is not the only, but nevertheless, a very significant setting for children's intellectual, physical, social, emotional and spiritual development. Maximising that development relies on the provision of coordinated learning opportunities in school, family and community settings. This statement is therefore underpinned by a commitment to enhancing the coherency of policy development and implementation action across the policy arenas of education, health and sport.
5. Enhancing HPE nationally in Australia should draw upon best practice across all the States and Territories. It should incorporate flexibility to enable education in the States and Territories to be responsive to, and provide for, distinct local learning needs and contexts.
6. As the leading professional association, ACHPER has a responsibility to inform ongoing HPE curriculum development undertaken by Federal and State/Territory governments and be responsive to agreed national education policy directions. It has a lead role to play in promoting advancements in curriculum development and pedagogical practices across the States and Territories and across all schools in Australia.
7. Planning for and investment in HPE curriculum development in schools needs to be accompanied by aligned development and investment in teacher education across Australia.

## **Points of clarification**

**The terminology associated with HPE varies and is open to differing interpretations. Amidst this variation, ACHPER offers the following clarification:**

- HPE is fundamentally about learning. HPE is concerned with the provision of learning experiences that are educationally worthwhile and that seek to develop skills, knowledge, understandings, values and attitudes and that will enable young people to live healthy and active lives.
- HPE draws on a number of sub-disciplines, including physical education, health education, personal development, outdoor education and dance. Each is acknowledged as providing distinct learning opportunities. State and Territory curricula variously draw on and integrate the sub-disciplines to achieve breadth and balance in learning in HPE.

- Contemporary HPE curricula reflect and promote an holistic conceptualisation of health, encompassing physical, mental, social, emotional and spiritual wellbeing. In accordance with the World Health Organisation Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion (WHO, 1986)<sup>iv</sup>, health is, therefore, seen as ‘a resource for everyday life...a positive concept emphasising social and personal resources, as well as physical capacities’.
- Across Australia, the HPE learning area embraces and extends to the notions of learning ‘in, through and about’ movement<sup>v</sup>. HPE also encompasses learning ‘for’ movement in diverse ways and contexts. Contexts of physical activity and sport are therefore central to HPE, but HPE is distinguished from ‘physical activity’ and ‘sport’ by virtue of its core focus on learning.
- Linkages with learning beyond the formal curriculum and beyond schools (in family, formal and informal community contexts, particularly associated with physical activity and sport) are a central consideration in curriculum planning, teaching and learning in HPE.
- HPE is a lifelong process and endeavour that has its foundations in early childhood education, and extends throughout and beyond the compulsory years of schooling. In identifying these characteristics of HPE, ACHPER reaffirms HPE as distinct from physical activity and sport, as reflected in the first point of clarification. HPE has an important role to play in the advancement of skills that are variously referred to as ‘essential’ or ‘life’ skills (including communication and interpersonal skills, and problem solving) and to learning that is traditionally associated with other curriculum areas (including literacy and numeracy).

## **The curriculum future of HPE across Australia**

HPE has long been recognised as a key contributor to a comprehensive and balanced curriculum in Australian schools. Reaffirming the commitments of the 1989 Hobart and 1999 Adelaide Declarations, Federalist Paper 2<sup>vi</sup>, confirmed HPE as an integral element of a ‘broad and comprehensive’ curriculum. It was clearly stated that ‘Education should support the spiritual, moral, cultural and physical development of young people as well as their intellectual development’ (p.17) and HPE was acknowledged as ‘increasingly critical for student and community well-being’. The 2008 *Melbourne Declaration on Education Goals for Young Australians* has again highlighted the unique contribution of HPE to a balanced world-class curriculum.

In the context of the *Melbourne Declaration*, ACHPER seeks enhanced and nationally comparable learning opportunities for all young Australians which will enable them to

gain the skills, knowledge and understanding to lead healthy and active lives, and support and encourage others to do likewise. ACHPER emphasises the significant role that HPE can thereby play in the achievement of the goals articulated in the *Melbourne Declaration*:

**Goal 1** – *Australian schooling promotes equity and excellence*

**Goal 2** – *All young Australians become successful learners, confident and creative individuals and active and informed citizens.*

The contribution of HPE to the realisation of these goals is, in ACHPER's view, indisputable. The subject matter of HPE clearly aligns with the core educational outcomes sought through these goals, including that young Australians will:

- have a sense of self-worth, self-awareness and personal identity that enables them to manage their emotional, mental, spiritual and physical wellbeing;
- are able to plan activities independently, collaborate, work in teams and communicate ideas;
- are enterprising, show initiative and use their creative abilities
- develop personal values and attributes such as honesty, resilience, empathy and respect for others;
- have the knowledge, skills, understanding and values to establish and maintain healthy, satisfying lives;
- relate well to others and form and maintain healthy relationships;
- are well prepared for their potential life roles as family, community and workforce members;
- embrace opportunities, make rational and informed decisions about their own lives and accept responsibility for their own actions;
- are motivated to reach their full potential; and
- have a sense of optimism about their lives and the future.

(MCEETYA, 2008)

Accordingly, ACHPER identifies HPE as essential to include in a National Curriculum entitlement for all young Australians.

## **Toward a National Curriculum Entitlement for HPE**

ACHPER's intention is to secure a curriculum entitlement which will support the realisation of the goals articulated in the Melbourne Declaration, and enable all young Australians to gain the skills, knowledge and understandings that underpin healthy and active lives. It is anticipated that this will require the development of a framework that focuses on curriculum as the basis for achieving learning outcomes that are accepted as essential for all young Australians to achieve. ACHPER therefore advocates that *all students should be provided with HPE learning experiences that will enable them to:*

- develop knowledge, skills, values and attitudes that underpin healthy and active lives;
- gain the knowledge, skills and understandings required to be able to make informed decisions about their health and lifestyles and be able to seek help and support when necessary;
- develop the knowledge, skills and understandings to become critical consumers of information about health, physical activity and healthy lifestyles;
- learn the fundamental and applied movement skills to be able to participate successfully in a variety of physical activities that promote positive attitudes to health and lifelong physical activity participation.

In line with the recommendations arising from Federalist Paper 2 (2007), it is envisaged that progressing towards an agreed HPE curriculum entitlement for all young Australians will:

- require agreement upon a set core content and achievement standards for HPE that are expected of students at the end of their schooling and at key junctures during their schooling;
- direct attention towards the alignment of curriculum, pedagogy and assessment;
- maintain flexibility for jurisdictions, systems, schools and teachers to design and implement a curriculum for students to achieve the specified standards; and
- seek consistency in reporting of learning achievement in HPE nationally.

To advance this work, ACHPER will:

- maintain regular communication with Federal and State Ministers and the National Curriculum Board;
- seek ministerial meetings federally that specifically acknowledge the critical role that HPE has to play at the interface of education and health policy and that promote cross-departmental conversation and commitments within government;
- seek advice, input and support from its members and key stakeholders;
- charge members of the ACHPER National Curriculum Working Group with the development of a draft framing paper for HPE in the National Curriculum;
- convene a National Curriculum forum at the ACHPER National and International Conference to be held in Brisbane, July 2009<sup>vii</sup>;
- following publication of the draft Framing Paper, convene consultation forums with members and key stakeholders through ACHPER State branches.

The resource issues associated with a national HPE curriculum entitlement will be fully articulated and accompanied by recommendations for how the resource issues should be addressed. ACHPER acknowledges that there is an undeniable and significant cost involved in ensuring the curriculum entitlement being sought. That cost is, however, recognised as a critical investment in the health, wellbeing and life prospects for young Australians, and in the future of Australia. All concerned should also consider the costs of not making this investment.

## Notes

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<sup>i</sup> The National Working Group comprises Associate Professor Dawn Penney (Chair) (University of Tasmania), Dr. Peter Hay (University of Queensland), Dr. Trent Brown (Monash University), Associate Professor Phil Morgan (University of Newcastle), Russell Brown (Flinders University), Graeme Quelch (president, ACHPER) and Jeff Emmel (National Executive Director, ACHPER).

<sup>ii</sup> HPE is the terminology used in a National Statement, reflecting the identification of HPE as a learning area in the Adelaide Declaration and more recently, the Melbourne Declaration.

<sup>iii</sup> Ministers taking part in the Fourth International Conference of Ministers and Senior Officials Responsible for Physical Education and Sport (MINEPS IV), 6-8 December 2004 in Athens, formally reaffirmed their belief that 'sport and physical education play a key role in society by contributing to national cohesion, overcoming prejudice and exercising a positive influence on public opinion'. The Athens Declaration recalled that 'the development of physical education and sport is one of the most effective means of improving, inter alia, health, hygiene, the prevention of HIV/AIDS, and the overall well-being of individuals, in particular young people'.

<sup>iv</sup> <http://www.who.int/healthpromotion/conferences/previous/ottawa/en/>

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<sup>v</sup> Arnold's conceptualisation has been widely employed in curriculum development in HPE across Australia and internationally. (Arnold, P. (1979). *Meaning in Movement, Sport and Physical Education*, London: Heinemann).

<sup>vi</sup> Council for the Australian Federation (2007). *Federalist paper 2. The Future of Schooling in Australia. Revised Edition. A Report by the Council for the Australian Federation. September 2007*. Melbourne: Department of Premier and Cabinet.

<sup>vii</sup> <http://www.achper.qut.edu.au/>