

Dear principals, teachers, students and parents

Australia can be proud of its rich democratic heritage. It is a remarkable history that many of us take for granted. We have the opportunity to reflect on the people, events and institutions that have given shape to our nation. Australia's history of achievement has been developed within a remarkably peaceful and democratic framework. History teaches us that an informed and active citizenry is essential for the continuation of a strong and vital Australian society.

All Australians feel privileged to have one of the most free and democratic societies in the world. I invite your school to join with other schools around Australia and participate in *Celebrating Democracy Week 2006*. During the Week, I ask schools to reflect on how our democracy shapes our harmonious way of life.

While we all enjoy living in our environment with our uniquely Australian wild life and plants, open spaces, landscapes and beaches, we don't often reflect on the 'glue' that binds our community so that we can all live together harmoniously and share in the benefits a democracy brings.

We all have a part to play. Knowing who we are as a people, and who we want to become as a nation, is important. Our different backgrounds, aspirations and experiences give us different perspectives of what our nation should be like now, and into the future.

Schools can reflect on the values and democracy which keep our communities safe, harmonious and enjoyable places to live during Celebrating Democracy Week 2006. Having a robust parliamentary system, supported by institutions that maintain the rule of law and protect human rights contributes to everyone's freedom.

The Australian Government promotes diversity, understanding and tolerance. Australia's harmonious, pluralist, multicultural society requires all of us to learn from each other, and to learn about each other. Schools make a major contribution in this area. *Celebrating Democracy Week 2006* allows schools to showcase their good work to parents and to the wider community.

Celebrating Democracy Week 2006 supports the National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-first Century, in particular the goals that students, when they leave school should "have the capacity to exercise judgement and responsibility in matters of morality, ethics and social justice, and the capacity to make sense of their world, to think about how things got to be the way they are, to make rational and informed decisions about their own lives and to accept responsibility for their own actions" and "be active and informed citizens with an understanding and appreciation of Australia's system of government and civic life".

Civics and citizenship education is a recognised priority for schooling in Australia. The Australian Government is committing nearly \$43.7 million to civics and citizenship education from 1997 to 2008.

Celebrating our democracy encourages students to appreciate the essential values

that underpin our democratic society. The National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools, endorsed by all State and Territory Ministers, highlights "developing student responsibility in local, national and global contexts" as a focus for schools in their values education efforts.

Celebrating Democracy Week 2006 supports all these national priorities.

"I have always thought that it is so important to listen to what other people are saying and understand that it is ok for someone to think differently, because diversity is what makes Australia great. Now I know that it is not only important to listen, but to speak as well." (Anika Bratzel, Hobart College, Tasmania)

During previous Celebrating Democracy Weeks, schools around Australia have joined in activities with Federal Members of Parliament and local councils, they have conducted debates and held mock parliaments and special ceremonies to recognise the contribution that volunteers, older Australians, Indigenous people and people from culturally diverse backgrounds make to our community.

The Australian Government funds small grants to help individual schools participate in Celebrating Democracy Week 2006. This year, I am pleased to announce that I have increased the small grants to \$1,000 for individual schools, and more for schools which conduct joint activities.

"Different people have different views they can feel passionately about. Everyone should be given an opportunity to be heard. ... they should be respectful to one another." Ruveyda Ozturk, Warrawang High School, NSW.

"It feels wonderful to be a young person in this country of freedom and caring, I feel like I can build a successful future and have a right to voice my opinion." Jing Xi Liu, Elwood College, Victoria

Celebrating Democracy Week 2006 will include an Every Voice Counts forum for Year 10 and 11 students. The students who were selected to participate in this forum in 2005 represented diverse backgrounds and locations, and learned first hand how our democracy functions to keep us safe and free. Students discussed current issues with parliamentarians and observed Question Time in the House of Representatives. Their feedback indicated the forum was one of the best experiences of their school life. I encourage all students to apply for a place at this forum.

I invite your school to participate in Celebrating Democracy Week 2006 and look forward to hearing about the activities that will be conducted around Australia from 18-24 October 2006.

Julie Bishop

Julie Bishop
Australian Government Minister for Education, Science and Training

Highlights of Celebrating Democracy Week 2006

On Wednesday 18 October 2006 in Parliament House, Canberra, the Hon Julie Bishop MP, the Minister for Education, Science and Training, will launch Celebrating Democracy Week 2006.

State and Territory winners of the Year 10 and 11 Every Voice Counts will be presented with certificates. The winners will be selected from their response to the topic: 'Living in an harmonious democracy - what it means to me The State and Territory winners will receive an all expenses paid trip to Canberra to take a first hand look at democracy in action and take part in a forum to debate the topic: 'Living harmoniously in our democracy. How young people can influence the future of our democracy.'

Visit the website <http://civicsandcitizenship.edu.au> for information on how to apply for Every Voice Counts! student competition. Alternatively, you could telephone Curriculum Corporation on (03) 9207 9600. Applications for Every Voice Counts! close on **Friday 8 September 2006**.

- Students from refugee backgrounds at Merrylands East Public School in NSW conducted a photographic display entitled "Celebrating Diversity in a Democracy."

- Calvary Lutheran Primary School in SA conducted an excursion on the Tjilbruke Trail to gain an understanding of Kurna geography and culture.

- Thornlie Primary School in WA held a breakfast assembly with the Australian Islamic College and Gwyne Park Primary School to celebrate a diverse and democratic culture.

- "Gallipoli at Goondiwindi" - students at Goondiwindi State High School, Qld, researched and commemorated the local soldiers who fought in WW1.

- St Joseph's Primary School held "Celebrating Women" which examined the changing roles of women over time.

*"This project is funded by the Australian Government
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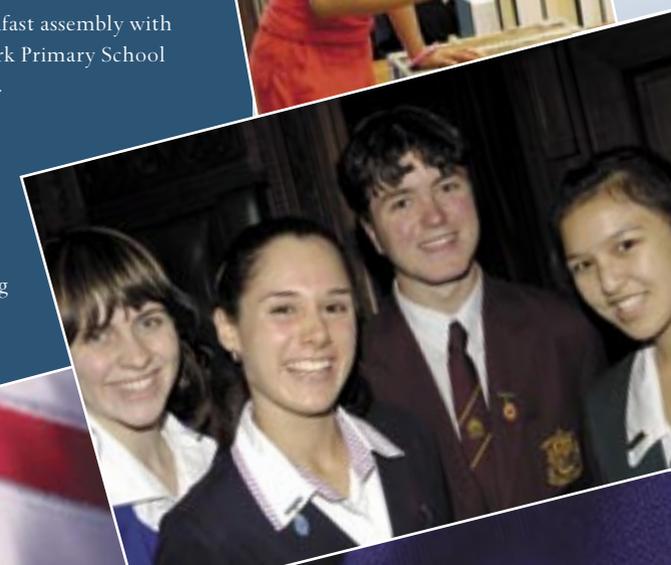


Australian Government
Department of Education,
Science and Training

Celebrating Democracy Week

Wednesday 18 October to
Tuesday 24 October 2006

Civics and citizenship
education for
a harmonious
democracy...



Linkages with other initiatives in Australian schools

Values Education

From 2004 to 2008 the Australian Government is providing funding of \$29.7 million to help make values education a core part of schooling.

The National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools, endorsed by all State and Territory Ministers in 2005, highlights "developing student responsibility in local, national and global contexts" as a key component for schools to focus on in their values education efforts. Using the National Framework as a guide, all schools around Australia will be expected to conduct a forum about how values education can become embedded into their school practice. Schools received a free kit to help them to prepare for their forum.

The Framework includes nine Values for Australian Schooling: Care and compassion; Doing your best; Fair go; Freedom; Honesty and trustworthiness; Integrity; Respect; Responsibility; and Understanding, tolerance and inclusion. These values help students appreciate their responsibilities as citizens and encourage them to resolve differences in constructive, non-violent and peaceful ways. For more information about Values Education visit the website <http://www.valueseducation.edu.au>.

Twenty six clusters of schools received funding to implement good practice in values education through the Values Education Good Practice Schools Project – Stage 1. The successful projects cover a range of topics including the teaching of values through philosophy, Indigenous education, links to the National Safe Schools Framework through building resilience and self-esteem in students, service learning, environmental issues and working with school communities to build safe and supportive learning communities. The findings from these projects are available on the values education website. Stage 2 will be commencing soon.

Studies of Asia and Australia

Studies of Asia and Australia has a key role in equipping Australia's young people to participate fully in a tolerant, harmonious and outward looking country. The

National Statement for Engaging Young Australians with Asia in Australian Schools supports other MCEETYA national priorities and identifies the broad knowledge, understanding, values and skills required to engage with Asia.

The Government is providing \$1.8 million funding per annum over the next three years to the Asia Education Foundation to work with schools to support studies of Asia and Australia. This funding provides Asia-related resources for primary and secondary schools and supports the development and delivery of professional learning for teachers. For more information visit the website <http://www.asiaeducation.edu.au>

History

The Australian Government provided \$4.93 million from 2000 to 2006 for curriculum resources and professional learning activities through the Commonwealth History Project. For more information visit the website <http://www.hyperhistory.org/>

Parliament and Civics Education Rebate (PACER)

Funding of \$16.3 million was provided in the 2006 Budget to help offset the cost of students who travel further than 150 kilometres to visit Parliament House, Old Parliament House and the Australian War Memorial. The rebate encourages students to learn more about our national democratic and historic institutions as part of their civics and citizenship education. For more information telephone 1300 368 248 or visit the website www.civicsandcitizenship.edu.au.

Visit the website <http://www.civicsandcitizenship.edu.au> to download your Celebrating Democracy Week application form and fax it to Curriculum Corporation on 1300 780 545 by **Friday 15 September 2006**. If you need help with your application please telephone Curriculum Corporation on (03) 9207 9600.

What's happening in civics and citizenship education in Australia?

Civics and citizenship education is a national priority. The Australian Government, State and Territory Ministers of Education are developing nationally consistent curriculum outcomes in civics and citizenship education, along with English, mathematics, science and information communications technology, through the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA).

The National Statements of Learning for civics and citizenship for Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 identifying common elements in all curriculum policies for civics and citizenship across Australia are completed. The Statements provide a common basis for education systems to develop greater consistency in their curriculum documents. The National Statements of Learning for civics and citizenship will become available later this year.

In 2004, MCEETYA conducted the first national assessment of civics and citizenship education for a representative sample of Year 6 primary and Year 10 secondary school students as the basis for national reporting. Future assessments are planned for 2007 and 2010. A report of the outcomes of the first national assessment will be released later in 2006.

The national assessment two key performance measures (KPMs) are (see the website: <http://www.mceetya.edu.au/taskfrce/civics.htm>):

- KPM 1: Civics: Knowledge and Understanding of Civic Institutions and Processes includes 'Knowledge of key concepts and understandings relating to civic institutions and processes in Australian democracy, government, law, national identity, diversity, cohesion and social justice.'
- KPM 2: Citizenship: Dispositions and Skills for Participation include 'Understandings related to the attitudes, values, dispositions, beliefs and actions that underpin active democratic citizenship.'

Under KPM 1 for example:

- Year 6 students are expected to be able "recognise the ways that understanding of and respect for commonalities and differences contribute to harmony within a democratic society", and
- Year 10 students are expected to be able "to analyse how Australia's ethnic and cultural diversity contribute to Australian democracy, identity and social cohesion."

Visit the website <http://www.civicsandcitizenship.edu.au> for more information about civics and citizenship education.

How can schools participate in Celebrating Democracy Week 2006?

Celebrating Democracy Week 2006 allows your school to demonstrate good practice in civics and citizenship education. Your school may like to develop a special theme, hold a debate with other schools, or host a special event for teachers, parents and students. You could show how your school uses the Discovering Democracy resources and the civics and citizenship education website <http://www.civicsandcitizenship.edu.au>

Use the Week to explore and understand the issues that affect our nation. Hold a debate on the values that help make Australia's democracy unique and invite your local Member of Parliament or Senator to attend. Explore the roles and responsibilities of local, State and Federal Government. Organise special parliaments, multi-faith events or workshops for young people to become involved in a local community issue.

Visit older Australians in a local nursing home and collect their stories. Run a civics quiz to raise money for charity. Collect the history of residents in the local area. Discuss Australia's peacekeeping role in overseas countries. Ask a grandparent to tell the class what they think it means to be a good citizen living in our democracy and ask them to compare it to when they were young.

Help to restore a local waterway or wild life habitat. Invite volunteer organisations, such as St John's Ambulance, Red Cross, the Royal Life Saving Association or Guide Dogs, parents and community members to your school's celebrations.

To register your school activity or to apply for a small grant visit the website <http://www.civicsandcitizenship.edu.au>, download the application form and fax it to Curriculum Corporation on 1300 780 545 by **Friday 15 September 2006**. If you need help with your application please telephone (03) 9207 9600.

All schools participating in *Celebrating Democracy Week 2006* will receive a certificate.

Visit the website <http://www.civicsandcitizenship.edu.au> to see the Discovering Democracy resources that can help your school to prepare for *Celebrating Democracy Week 2006*.

