



VISUAL ARTS & DESIGN  
EDUCATORS ASSOCIATION

## VADEA Response to NAAE call for status review for the *Australian Curriculum: The Arts*

The National Advocates for Arts Education (NAAE) has called for a research-based status review into the implementation of the *Australian Curriculum: The Arts* following meetings in Canberra (Educators call for a status review of Australian arts curriculum implementation, 18/9/2019).

NAAE is a network of the national professional arts and arts education associations across Australia, including Art Education Australia (AEA) and The National Association for the Visual Arts (NAVA). Whilst the Visual Arts and Design Educators Association New South Wales (VADEA NSW) is part of the AEA community, the current position held by NAAE and AEA on the *Australian Curriculum: The Arts* does not represent the views of NSW visual arts and design educators. The NAAE and AEA have not consulted with VADEA NSW on the positions they have adopted.

VADEA would welcome a research based review of the *Australian Curriculum: The Arts*. However, NAAE has limited the scope of the review to the implementation of the curriculum. The issue for NSW Visual Arts educators, and educators in some of the other arts disciplines continues to be that the *Australian Curriculum: The Arts* does not:

- offer students a high quality curriculum that matches the quality and academic rigour of the existing syllabuses in Visual Arts K-10 in NSW.
- prepare students to engage in the conceptual and practical demands of learning in Visual Arts in Years 11 and 12
- adequately support the development of students' intellectual autonomy in the context of the 21st century artworld.

As such, a review into the Australian Curriculum: The Arts should consider the quality of curriculum, alongside a review of the implementation.

VADEA NSW is committed to a curriculum which is robust and coherent, fosters students' artistic beliefs about art, their practical and conceptual reasoning, representational autonomy and a curriculum which acknowledges artworks and art world phenomena. Rather than defaulting to an aesthetic knowledge baseline for art education, VADEA NSW embraces the diversity of approaches to the Visual Arts in the current NSW curriculum, "without resorting to inflated claims of inter-domain enhancement" (Brown, 2017, p.19). A key concern relates to a competency based agenda, which correlates the value of art education to general capabilities, which include critical and creative thinking, falls short of the more meaningful characteristics of the subject and reduces disciplinary knowledge to skills. Although VADEA NSW acknowledges the significance of capabilities in a contemporary vision for education, VADEA NSW are concerned that reducing the contribution of the arts to the capabilities alone is dangerous and has the potential to erode the richness of content knowledge within our subject.

VADEA NSW celebrates the efforts of teachers in NSW for promoting high quality art education. Visual Arts is ranked the 10th most popular subject in the 2019 HSC candidature, with over 9000 students studying the subject. It is the only creative arts subject ranked in the top 15 courses in NSW. Visual Arts has maintained this prominent position for a significant number of years due to the robust and coherent curriculum, which reinforces a continuum of learning based on discipline specific knowledge, skills and understanding, building for success in the HSC. This success is demonstrated in the annual showcase of Bodies of Work in ARTEXPRESS, one of the most patronised exhibitions at the Art Gallery of New South Wales and travels throughout each year in regional galleries in NSW..

The enduring nature of the visual arts, visual design and photographic syllabuses over the past 20 years reflects the robust and conceptually significant basis on which these syllabi formed. The current NSW visual arts curriculum is underpinned by rich traditions and is informed by ongoing and shifting contemporary practice. It supports student learning in acquiring the knowledge, skills and understanding in visual arts, whilst ensuring the quality of teacher pedagogy.

*The Visual Arts and Design Educators Association (VADEA NSW) represents the largest membership of visual arts educators in Australia, with over 900 members. VADEA NSW is committed to contributing in a positive and constructive way to build the profile of the value of student learning in the visual arts and design and communicate this understanding to visual arts and design and other educators, policy makers, parents, students and the community. VADEA NSW is committed to achieving a high quality visual arts and design curriculum for NSW that prepares students for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, recognising the arts as disciplines with distinctive bodies of knowledge.*