



**B O A R D O F S T U D I E S**  
N E W S O U T H W A L E S

**HUMAN SOCIETY AND ITS  
ENVIRONMENT K-6**

**CONSULTATION REPORT**

**September 1998**

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# **HUMAN SOCIETY AND ITS ENVIRONMENT K–6 CONSULTATION REPORT**

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Background to the development of the draft documents

The *Human Society and Its Environment K–6 Draft Syllabus* (1998) and *Human Society and Its Environment Draft K–6 Support Document* (1998) were developed from a writing brief endorsed by the Board of Studies in December 1997. This brief incorporated amendments to the *Human Society and Its Environment K–6 Writing Brief*, released to schools for consultation in July 1997.

A summary of key dates in the development of the Human Society and Its Environment K–6 Syllabus by the Board of Studies follows.

<b>1994</b>	<i>October</i>	Initial <i>Human Society and Its Environment K–6 Draft Syllabus</i> released for consultation in Term 4.
<b>1995</b>	<i>April</i>	Consultation on the draft syllabus completed. Government commissioned inquiry into outcomes and profiling (Eltis Committee Review) and subsequent halt on syllabus development.
	<i>August</i>	Teachers' comments on the <i>Human Society and Its Environment K–6 Draft Syllabus</i> referred to in the Eltis Report. The Report recommended that a Human Society and Its Environment K–6 Syllabus be released for optional implementation in 1998 and full implementation in 1999/2000 (Recommendation 8).
<b>1996</b>	<i>July</i>	Human Society and Its Environment K–6 Framework developed by a working party. Framework endorsed by the Board of Studies.
<b>1997</b>	<i>July</i>	<i>Human Society and Its Environment K–6 Draft Writing Brief</i> released for consultation.
	<i>October</i>	End of consultation on the writing brief.
	<i>December</i>	Revised writing brief endorsed by the Board of Studies.
<b>1998</b>	<i>February</i>	Human Society and Its Environment K–6 project team endorsed by the Board of Studies. Proposed release dates for draft syllabus (May 1998) and final syllabus (October 1998) endorsed by the Board of Studies. Trial schools established.
	<i>March</i>	Checking-out of draft syllabus material with teachers at seven locations in NSW.
	<i>April</i>	<i>Human Society and Its Environment K–6 Draft Syllabus</i> and <i>Human Society and Its Environment K–6 Draft Support Document</i> endorsed by the Board of Studies for release to schools.
	<i>May</i>	<i>Human Society and Its Environment K–6 Draft Syllabus</i> and <i>Human Society and Its Environment K–6 Draft Support Document</i> dispatched to schools.
	<i>June</i>	Survey and <i>Human Society and Its Environment K–6: Additional Draft Unit Overviews</i> dispatched to schools.
	<i>July</i>	Focus group meetings conducted by Yann, Campbell, Hoare and Wheeler (strategic research and planning) in five locations; staff interviews conducted in five schools. Adjustment to the draft documents based on consultation feedback.
	<i>August</i>	

## Consultation documents

The first draft documents developed for the revision were:

- the *Human Society and Its Environment K–6 Draft Syllabus*;
- the *Human Society and Its Environment K–6 Draft Support Document*.

These documents were endorsed by the Board in April, 1998. Distribution of them to schools and relevant educational organisations and institutions occurred in late May, 1998.

A second set of units of work, in the document *Human Society and Its Environment K–6: Additional Draft Unit Overviews* (1998), was also distributed during the consultation period. Distribution of this document occurred in late June, 1998.

In addition to the above documents, the following support documents were developed for consultation as part of the package:

- *Human Society and Its Environment K–6 Draft Parents' Package* (flyer and booklet);
- *Human Society and Its Environment K–6 Draft Principal's Package*.

## Approach to consultation

The consultation processes included the collection of data from focus group meetings in five locations in NSW, staff interviews in five schools, written submissions, fax-back response sheets and a survey sent to all schools and over 80 relevant organisations and institutions (including five different faculties in each NSW university). Teachers from 18 schools that trialled the draft syllabus and units of work also provided feedback on the document.

The survey was distributed to schools and organisations in late June. The Office of the Board of Studies received a total of 506 survey returns and 13 faxed comments.

The survey items and the discussion agenda at the focus group meetings and staff interviews questioned the extent to which the *Human Society and Its Environment K–6* documents met the requirements of the writing brief endorsed by the Board in December 1997.

Focus group meetings were conducted by the strategic research and planning firm Yann, Campbell, Hoare and Wheeler. These meetings, which were held at Glen Innes, Sydney's northern beaches, south-west Sydney, Parkes and Wollongong, involved 40 teachers and school executives.

The first staff interview was held at Tyalla Public School on 22 July 1998 and the last was held at North Rocks Public School on 5 August 1998. A total of 127 teachers and school executives participated in the five staff interview meetings.

The Office of the Board of Studies also received 13 written submissions on the draft documents.

A working party of representatives from the peak parent organisations provided advice during the development of the *Human Society and Its Environment K–6 Parents' Package*. A working party of principals provided advice during the development of the support document for principals, *Human Society and Its Environment K–6 Principal's Package*.

## **Consultation findings**

The consultation on the draft Human Society and Its Environment K–6 documents indicates strong support for the documents. Analysis of survey responses, written submissions, fax replies and discussion reports from focus group meetings and staff interviews indicates:

- 1. The draft syllabus and units of work have been positively received.**
- 2. There are no significant barriers to the introduction of the syllabus.**
- 3. The release of a syllabus in this key learning area is eagerly awaited.**

The general response from the consultation is outlined in what follows:

### ***The draft syllabus: General response from the consultation***

- The syllabus is 'user-friendly'.
- The information is clear and concise. A few respondents consider aspects of the document to be repetitious.
- The subject matter in Stage 3 (and to a lesser extent in Stage 2) is excessive.

- Teachers appreciate the direction provided in the 'Content' section, whereas a few written submissions express concern with this section.
- Some respondents would like to see the outcomes and content in Early Stage 1, Stage 1 and Stage 2 broadened to ensure that student learning is not restricted to the local area.
- A few respondents would like to see particular aspects of environmental education added to the content.
- The general religious education component needs to be developed further and made more explicit.
- Some aspects of Stage 3 content and related outcomes are too difficult for Stage 3 students.
- The 'General Principles for Planning, Programming, Assessing, Reporting and Evaluating' section is lacking in practical assistance, particularly in relation to assessing and reporting.
- The glossary is well supported.

### ***The support document (units of work)***

- The support document is 'user-friendly'
- The units of work are well supported.
- Many schools see the units as providing the basis for their school plans and teaching programs.
- A few teachers expressed concern with the prospect of teaching Human Society and Its Environment in each term, as implied by the sample school plans.
- The units are sufficiently flexible to be either adopted as they are or modified according to individual circumstances.
- The sample school plans are not particularly helpful for one-teacher and two-teacher schools.
- The 'Teaching Strategies and Practices' section is well supported.

### ***Other findings***

- Teachers feel the need to develop their knowledge further in relation to general religious education (specifically knowledge about different religions), Aboriginal education (specifically Aboriginal history) and civics.
- The time available to teach Human Society and Its Environment is seen as being a general curriculum issue rather than something particular to this key learning area. Time that was once available to Human Society and Its Environment (Social Studies) has been taken by other curriculum areas and initiatives.

- Some teachers in some schools do not teach Human Society and Its Environment in each term, preferring to alternate between units of work in Human Society and Its Environment and those in Science and Technology.
- Schools are looking forward to the release of the final syllabus and units of work.

## **Proposed improvements arising out of the consultation**

Despite high approval on most aspects of the revised documents, some criticisms require attention in order to improve the documents. These improvements are as follows:

### ***The syllabus***

- That a review of the outcomes, indicators and content be undertaken to ensure that an Aboriginal perspective is incorporated in accordance with advice from the AECG.
- That the outcomes, indicators and content incorporate a more contemporary environmental perspective, ensuring specific reference to ecologically sustainable development.
- That the indicators for each outcome include more explicit references to skills development and the development of values and attitudes.
- That the Early Stage 1, Stage 1 and Stage 2 outcomes and content in the syllabus be reviewed to ensure that student learning is not limited to the local area.
- That the subject matter in Stage 2 and Stage 3 be reduced in both the amount and demand (where appropriate).
- That feedback from teachers involved in the trialling of the syllabus be used to modify and/or remove those learning experiences and teaching strategies considered to be difficult to implement.
- That explicit reference to general religious education be apparent in the outcomes, indicators, content and glossary.
- That the 'General Principles for Planning, Programming, Assessing, Reporting and Evaluating' section be developed further to include practical advice.
- That the outcomes, indicators and content incorporate a broader definition of technology, consistent with that used in the key learning area of Science and Technology.
- That a review of the outcomes, indicators and content be undertaken to ensure adequate reference to the use of computer technologies.

- That the subject matter be reviewed and amended (where appropriate) to avoid areas of real or perceived overlap with subject matter drafted for 7–10 History.

***The support document (units of work)***

- That sample school plans for one-teacher and two-teacher schools be developed and included.
- That the ‘British Occupation’ unit be revised, leading to a reduction in the scope of subject matter covered.
- That the ‘State and Federal Government’ and ‘Australian Democracy’ units be reviewed to reduce repetition and to ensure stage appropriateness.
- That a review of all units be undertaken with the intention of reducing their duration, based on feedback from the schools involved in trialling.
- That a review of the sample school plans be undertaken to ensure appropriate sequencing and balanced treatment of content within each stage.
- That the resource section for each unit be reviewed to ensure the currency and accuracy of documents and websites cited.

***Other matters***

- That the ‘Resource List’ on the Board’s website be developed further and maintained.
- That it be clearly stated in the support document and the principal’s package that the units of work are not mandatory.
- That information about the professional development needs of teachers expressed during the consultation, should be conveyed to school system authorities, highlighting those aspects specifically mentioned by teachers: Aboriginal culture and history, general religious education, civics and citizenship education.
- That Board officers meet with representatives of school systems to identify areas where support materials and other resources are planned for development in order to ensure that duplication is avoided and that the needs of all schools are met during the implementation of the syllabus.
- That in addition to reducing the subject matter in the Human Society and Its Environment K–6 Syllabus, the broader issue of time allocations in the K–6 curriculum be examined further, with particular focus on those aspects of curriculum, pedagogy, student welfare and classroom management that contribute to a feeling of curriculum ‘overload’.

# **FULL REPORT**

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

## **2. CONSULTATION FINDINGS**

## **3. ADDITIONAL FINDINGS**

## **4. CONCLUSION**

## 1.1 Background to the development of the draft documents

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The findings from the survey, faxed-back comments, focus group meetings, staff interviews and written submissions follows. Feedback from schools involved in the trialling project is also included.

Differences in the pattern of responses to the survey items were analysed for the following variables:

- i) individual/group;
- ii) small group response (less than five)/large group response (more than five);
- iii) metropolitan/country;
- iv) government school/non-government school;
- v) small school (less than 300 enrolment)/large school (more than 300 enrolment);
- vi) small enrolment of students with language backgrounds other than English (less than 25%)/large enrolment of students with language backgrounds other than English (25% or more);
- vii) teaching experience (up to 10 years/11-20 years/more than 20 years);
- viii) school executive/classroom teacher.

Cross tabulations of responses to each item in the survey were undertaken, together with tests on the significance of variations (using the computation of the chi square statistic).

There was generally little variation across the data with the exception of questions 7.4 and 7.5. These questions asked whether the subject matter for Stage 2 (Q7.4) and Stage 3 (Q7.5) could reasonably be covered in the time available. In both instances the variation in the responses between government schools and non-government schools was significant (see Section 2.5, under 'Subject matter' on page 17).

## **2.1 General findings**

Analysis of survey responses, written submissions, fax replies and discussion reports from focus group meetings and staff interviews indicates:

- 1. The draft syllabus and units of work have been positively received.**
- 2. There are no significant barriers to the introduction of the syllabus.**
- 3. The release of a syllabus in this key learning area is eagerly awaited.**

An approval response from 96% of survey respondents indicates that the draft syllabus clearly shows the scope and sequence for learning in Human Society and Its Environment K–6.

## **2.2 Introduction, rationale, aims and objectives**

There was general support for the ‘Introduction’ and ‘Rationale’ sections of the draft syllabus. These aspects of the draft syllabus, similar versions of which some teachers would have been familiar with from previous draft Human Society and Its Environment K–6 documents, were confirmed as achieving their respective purposes. The introduction (93% approval) and the rationale (94% approval) are considered to be clear and concise statements by respondents to the survey.

The survey stated the purpose of the aims and objectives in a syllabus and asked whether the particular aims and objectives in the draft syllabus were appropriate for this key learning area. Respondents to the survey indicated that both the aims (96% approval) and objectives (94% approval) are considered to be appropriate for Human Society and Its Environment K–6.

## **2.3 Overview of learning in Human Society and Its Environment**

The purpose of the ‘Overview of Learning in Human Society and Its Environment’ section is to provide information about the knowledge and understandings, skills, and values and attitudes developed through the syllabus.

94% of respondents to the survey consider that this section achieved its purpose. Though some participants at focus groups meetings and staff interviews commented that teachers rarely refer to ‘these sections’ when working with syllabuses, 91% of respondents to the survey consider the overview to be clear and concise.

The scope and sequence of subject matter was developed to provide a basis for the development of teaching programs and school plans, particularly for those who might choose to develop their own units of work. There was general agreement from respondents to the survey (95% approval) that the scope and sequence of subject matter achieves this purpose.

Subject matter organisers were developed to categorise the subject matter within each strand. Though teachers made no mention of these at focus group meetings and staff interviews or through the survey, some written submissions see the subject matter organisers as confusing in relation to other organisational elements of the syllabus — an unnecessary and possibly distracting inclusion.

## **2.4 Outcomes**

There was general agreement (from 91% of respondents to the survey) that the outcomes in the draft syllabus provide clear statements of the knowledge and understandings, skills, and values and attitudes to be developed by students as they progress through school. It was also agreed (90% approval) that the indicators would assist teachers in monitoring student progress within a stage. Teachers at focus groups, however, indicated that some outcomes are more ‘knowledge-related’ than ‘skill-related’. This view was also expressed in a few written submissions.

There was a view expressed at staff interviews and in one written submission that the expectations represented in the Stage 3 outcomes and associated indicators may be too high. It was seen that particular sets of indicators, particularly those concerning change and continuity and social systems and structures, were assuming a depth of understanding of issues and consequences considered to be beyond most students. It was also recognised that by having a limited number of outcomes (28

in total), a quantity endorsed by teachers through the writing brief, the indicators would have to be either broad and encompassing or numerous — anecdotal responses from teachers would suggest that extensive lists of indicators would not be well received.

## **2.5 Content**

### *Content overviews*

The way content is presented in the draft syllabus received favourable support from teachers at focus groups and staff interviews. This section also received the second highest level of strong agreement from respondents through the survey (with 33.9% strongly agreeing — 92% agreement in all) indicating that it provides teachers with adequate guidance for what should be taught in each stage.

The main criticism of this section came from written submissions regarding the ‘Implications for Learning and Teaching’ component. Three submissions did not support this component. One submission considered the Stage 3 ‘Implications’ to be excessive and difficult to fulfil unless teachers integrated Human Society and Its Environment with other key learning areas. In general, however, there was overwhelming support from teachers and in some of the written submissions, for the explicit description of content presented in the draft syllabus.

### *Subject matter*

Teachers had requested a reduction in the subject matter when commenting on the July 1997 writing brief. As a result of this request the project team reduced the subject matter by a third in its drafting of the syllabus. As part of the consultation on the draft syllabus, teachers were asked whether the quantity of subject matter in each stage could be reasonably managed in school plans and class programs. In responding to this question, some distinction was made between the stages, with Early Stage 1 (77%) and Stage 1 (75%) receiving greater support than Stage 2 (72%) and Stage 3 (68%). Further, the variation in the responses for Stages 2 and 3 between government schools and non-government schools was significant, with a 69% approval response from government schools and an 87.5% approval response from non-government schools for Stage 2 and a 65% approval response from government schools and an 84% approval response from non-government schools in relation to Stage 3.

Some written submissions and participants at focus group meetings and staff interviews stated that the subject matter in Stage 3 (and, to a lesser extent, Stage 2) exceeded what is possible in the time available. In general, there was a clear indication that the content in Stage 3 is excessive, considering the time that teachers are able to allocate to Human Society and Its Environment in what was described as a ‘crowded curriculum’. The issue of time available both in relation to Human Society and Its Environment’ and other key learning areas is taken up in Section 3.2 ‘K–6 time allocations and Human Society and Its Environment, on page 23.

### ***Implications for learning and teaching***

The ‘Implications for Learning and Teaching’ sections were developed to provide teachers with specific direction about what is to be taught in each stage. Respondents to the survey indicated that this had been achieved in each stage, with little variance in response rates across the stages: Early Stage 1 (92% approval); Stage 1 (91% approval); Stage 2 (92% approval); and Stage 3 (91%) approval. Though some written submissions expressed concern with the ‘prescriptive nature’ of this section, teachers at focus group meetings indicated a preference for more guidance and direction rather than less in regard to syllabus content. Specific feedback from schools involved in the trial of the syllabus and units of work indicates that, with the exception of a small number of learning experiences and teaching strategies (which were identified by teachers from these schools), the majority of the learning experiences and teaching strategies are achievable and helpful.

### ***General***

Some written submissions see the content as being restrictive for students in Early Stage 1 and Stage 1, with significant focus on the local community in the subject matter. These respondents requested a broadening of the content beyond the familiar. In contrast, some teachers in rural schools and a few in metropolitan schools commented on the ‘limited’ social/environmental experiences of the students they teach and raised issues concerning access to necessary resources (both human and other) to ‘broaden’ students’ life experiences/interactions.

The coverage of like-content in Human Society and Its Environment K–6 and History 7–10 was raised as a concern by some teachers of History from Central Schools involved in the consultation. These teachers stated that they would not have anything to teach students in Year 7 if they covered the proposed content in the K–6 draft. Comments in a written submission on the same issue raised concern in regard to two areas, namely civics and British colonisation/Aboriginal contact, in which

these aspects of subject matter were listed in draft syllabus material K–6 and 7–10 (History). The need to avoid overlap (either real or perceived) was emphasised in this submission.

## **2.6 General principles for planning, programming, assessing, reporting and evaluating**

The section entitled ‘General Principles for Assessing, Planning, Programming, Reporting and Evaluating’ received an 86% approval response in relation to achieving its intended purpose.

Teachers who commented on this section stated the need for more practical advice, particularly with respect to programming, assessing and reporting. The need for pro formas was a common theme.

## **2.7 The glossary**

The glossary was developed to provide teachers and parents with definitions for terms used in the syllabus and to provide some background information about people, organisations and events. Respondents to the survey are of the view that the glossary achieves these purposes, with an approval response of 95% (47% of respondents strongly agreeing).

## **2.8 Design, layout and language**

Participants and respondents generally agreed that the draft Human Society and Its Environment K–6 documents are ‘user friendly’ and accessible for teachers. It was generally agreed (with a 93% approval response from respondents to the survey) that the documents are written in clear and concise language.

Many participants at focus meetings and staff interviews spoke favourably about the consistent approach to syllabus design that has occurred over the last twelve months. There was strong support for the way in which the design and layout of the documents acknowledged primary teachers’ use of curriculum documents. Preference for dot-pointed information in curriculum documents rather than excessive prose was expressed at both focus meetings and staff interviews — it was felt that the draft syllabus had the appropriate mix.

There was some discussion at focus group meetings and staff interviews about the usefulness of releasing the units of work in separate stage documents. In general, no preference for how material should be organised was identifiable.

The need for colour coding or some form of navigational system to assist easy location of stage-related information was highlighted as a required feature by teachers at staff interviews.

## **2.9 Support documents for teachers, parents and principals**

### **2.9.1 *Sample school plans***

Sample school plans were included in the draft support document to provide schools with some options for school planning when using the units of work. Though comments accompanying some of the survey returns indicate the need for additional plans, particularly for small schools, the general view is that the plans will assist schools in making judgements about the selection of units from Kindergarten to Year 6. As part of the consultation process, a small schools network was approached to assist in the development of sample plans based on the units of work, particularly for one-teacher and two-teacher schools. This network provided plans for multi-age class groups as well as strategies for linking units across several stages.

### **2.9.2 *The unit overviews***

Twenty-eight draft units of work were developed to support the syllabus.

The draft units of work were, on the whole, received very favourably. The respondents to the survey and participants at focus groups and staff interviews view the units of work as assisting teachers in planning their class programs. A number of respondents to the survey chose to comment on only one or two stages in this section of the survey.

- About 91% of respondents to the survey are of the view that the Early Stage 1 units of work are stage appropriate. 92% of respondents feel the units of work will support teachers in developing their programs.

- The Stage 1 units of work were judged to be stage appropriate by 91% of respondents. Approximately 92% of respondents believe that the units will support teachers in developing their programs.
- About 88% of respondents to the survey are of the view that the Stage 2 units of work are stage appropriate. A similar number of respondents feel the units of work will support teachers in developing their programs.
- The Stage 3 units of work were judged to be stage appropriate by 90% of respondents. Approximately 90% of respondents believe the units will support teachers in developing their programs.

A few written submissions and some respondents to the survey queried whether it was expected that teachers would be required to cover four units of work each year, effectively one unit of work per term. Some teachers were concerned with this prospect owing to their current approach to programming or in relation to future planning.

There are indications that school plans in the key learning area of Human Society and Its Environment vary considerably between schools (and in some cases within schools). Some approaches that were evident included:

- the use of a single sheet which specifies key days and celebrations as the basis of class programs;
- a comprehensive school plan that includes a file of units and associated resource material covering Kindergarten through to Year 6;
- the programming of Human Society and Its Environment and Science and Technology in alternate terms, effectively teaching two units per year in each of these key learning areas;
- the use of Aboriginal, multicultural and environmental ‘perspectives’ issues as the basis of key learning area programs with a specific focus on the development of English literacy skills;
- the selection of topics based on students’ current interests and in relation to subject matter in other key learning areas.

Despite the different approaches to and plans for Human Society and Its Environment currently operating in schools, there is a strong view that the syllabus and units of work will provide

direction, continuity, and consistency both for teachers and students within and across schools. Principals, executives and teachers involved in the consultation view this as a necessary and overdue development for this key learning area.

### **2.9.3 *Teaching strategies and practices***

Advice on teaching strategies and practices referred to in the units was included to provide teachers with some guidance in the organisation and management of these strategies and practices. The general response to this section was very positive, with an approval response of 94% (41% strongly agreeing that this section achieved its purpose).

### **2.9.4 *Parents' package***

The draft parents' package was developed as part of the syllabus package for Human Society and Its Environment K–6. Feedback from representatives of the Federation of the NSW Parents and Citizens Association, the NSW Federation of School Community Organisations and the NSW Parents' Council indicates approval for the design, contents and information provided in the draft material developed for the package.

### **2.9.5 *Principal's package***

The draft principal's package was also developed as part of the syllabus package for Human Society and Its Environment K–6. Feedback from a sample of principals indicates approval for the design, contents and information provided in the draft material developed for the package.

### **3.1 General religious education**

Though general religious education is not new in relation to curriculum requirements, it would appear to be a new area of teaching for many teachers. Some respondents to the survey questioned the meaning of the term, ‘general religious education’, while participants at staff interviews expressed a need for greater information about this aspect of the Human Society and Its Environment key learning area.

The survey asked whether general religious education had been clearly incorporated into the syllabus. This question received the lowest approval response (62%) and the highest disapproval response (10%). However, it should be pointed out that a significant number of respondents (26%) appeared to reserve their judgement. This could indicate that a number of respondents were unsure of what was being incorporated into the syllabus. It could also indicate that respondents were undecided as to whether its presence was sufficiently clear.

### **3.2 K–6 time allocations and Human Society and Its Environment**

Comments accompanying the survey and feedback from participants at focus group meetings and staff interviews clearly indicate that Human Society and Its Environment is not a priority area in many schools. At the same time, it should be stressed, that there is a great desire for direction and support in the area.

It would appear that the focus on initiatives in other key learning areas and other policy priorities has led to a steady decline in the time given to the programming of Social Studies (in the late 1980s) / Human Society and Its Environment (1990–98). Though time allocations vary across schools, few appear to specify K–6 content in any explicit form in this key learning area. Though some schools have retained a school plan of mandatory units, there are indications that the treatment of content may not be balanced across all aspects of the key learning area and that the sharing of time with Science and Technology occurs in some classes. These findings are

consistent with those reported in the Board's 1996 evaluation of the 1991 *Science and Technology K–6 Syllabus*.

Though largely anecdotal, findings in this area may have implications for the implementation of this syllabus as well as the implementation of key learning area syllabuses that will follow Human Society and Its Environment K–6 (and/or possibly time currently allocated to Science and Technology).

### **3.3 Teachers' knowledge**

Participants at both focus groups and staff interviews emphasised the need for professional development and additional support in teaching Human Society and Its Environment. The most common forms of support requested by teachers were professional development programs and resources that provide subject knowledge in some particular aspects of the key learning area, namely knowledge of Aboriginal history and society, knowledge of civics, and knowledge of religions and belief systems. Training in the use of computer technology, with particular reference to the use of the Internet, was also mentioned.

### **3.4 Additional support**

A number of improvements were requested as part of the further development of the documents. The requests, which were mainly provided through written submissions, were in relation to the following:

- *Aboriginal perspectives:* The need to further develop Aboriginal perspectives in relation to outcomes, content and specific units of work.
- *Asia education perspectives:* The need to include references to Asian countries and cultures K–6.
- *Environmental education:* The need to strengthen subject matter related to ecologically sustainable development.

- *Technology*: The need to broaden the way in which technology was defined in the syllabus (to be consistent with the very broad meaning used in the Science and Technology syllabus) and to increase references to the use of computer technologies.
- *World history and World geography*: The need to include subject matter and associated implications for learning and teaching related to world history and world geography.

## 4.1 Consultation findings

The consultation on the draft Human Society and Its Environment K–6 documents indicates strong support for the draft documents. The general response from the consultation with respect to each document is as follows:

### *The draft syllabus: General response from the consultation*

- The syllabus is ‘user-friendly’.
- The information is clear and concise. A few respondents consider aspects of the document to be repetitious.
- The subject matter in Stage 3 (and to a lesser extent in Stage 2) is excessive.
- Teachers appreciate the direction provided in the content section, whereas a few written submissions express concern with this section.
- Some respondents would like to see the outcomes and content in Early Stage 1, Stage 1 and Stage 2 broadened to ensure that student learning is not restricted to the local area.
- A few respondents would like to see particular aspects of environmental education added to the content.
- The general religious education component needs to be developed further and made more explicit.
- Some aspects of Stage 3 content and related outcomes are too difficult for Stage 3 students.
- The ‘General Principles for Planning, Programming, Assessing, Reporting and Evaluating’ section is lacking in practical assistance, particularly in relation to assessing and reporting.
- The glossary is well supported.

### *The support document (units of work)*

- The support document is ‘user-friendly’.
- The units of work are well supported.
- Many schools see the units as providing the basis for their school plans and teaching programs.

- A few teachers expressed concern with the prospect of teaching Human Society and Its Environment in each term, as implied by the sample school plans.
- The units are sufficiently flexible either to be adopted as they are or modified according to individual circumstances.
- The sample school plans are not particularly helpful for one-teacher and two-teacher schools.
- The ‘Teaching Strategies and Practices’ section is well supported.

### ***Other findings***

- Teachers feel the need to develop their knowledge further in relation to general religious education (specifically knowledge about different religions), Aboriginal education (specifically Aboriginal history) and civics.
- The time available to teach Human Society and Its Environment is seen as being a general curriculum issue rather than something particular to this key learning area. Time that was once available to Human Society and Its Environment (Social Studies) has been taken by other curriculum areas and initiatives.
- Some teachers in some schools do not teach Human Society and Its Environment in each term, preferring to alternate between units of work in Human Society and Its Environment and those in Science and Technology.
- Schools are looking forward to the release of the final syllabus and units of work.

## **4.2 Proposed improvements arising out of the consultation**

Despite high approval on most aspects of the revised documents, there are some criticisms that require attention to improve the documents. These improvements are as follows:

### ***The syllabus***

- That a review of the outcomes, indicators and content be undertaken to ensure that an Aboriginal perspective is incorporated in accordance with advice from the AECG.
- That the outcomes, indicators and content incorporate a more contemporary environmental perspective, ensuring specific reference to ecologically sustainable development.
- That the indicators for each outcome include more explicit references to skills development and the development of values and attitudes.
- That the Early Stage 1, Stage 1 and Stage 2 outcomes and content in the syllabus be reviewed to ensure that student learning is not limited to the local area.

- That the subject matter in Stage 2 and Stage 3 be reduced in both the amount and demand (where appropriate).
- That feedback from teachers involved in the trialling of the syllabus be used to modify and/or remove those learning experiences and teaching strategies considered to be difficult to implement.
- That explicit reference to general religious education be apparent in the outcomes, indicators, content and glossary.
- That the ‘General Principles for Planning, Programming, Assessing, Reporting and Evaluating’ section be developed further to include practical advice.
- That the outcomes, indicators and content incorporate a broader definition of technology, consistent with that used in the key learning area of Science and Technology.
- That a review of the outcomes, indicators and content be undertaken to ensure adequate reference to the use of computer technologies.
- That the subject matter be reviewed and amended (where appropriate) to avoid areas of real or perceived overlap with subject matter drafted for 7–10 History.

***The support document (units of work)***

- That sample school plans for one-teacher and two-teacher schools be developed and included.
- That the ‘British Occupation’ unit be revised, leading to a reduction in the scope of subject matter covered.
- That the ‘State and Federal Government’ and ‘Australian Democracy’ units be reviewed to reduce repetition and to ensure stage appropriateness.
- That a review of all units be undertaken with the intention of reducing their duration based on feedback from the schools involved in trialling.
- That a review of the sample school plans be undertaken to ensure appropriate sequencing and balanced treatment of content within each stage.
- That the resource section for each unit be reviewed to ensure the currency and accuracy of documents and websites cited.

***Other matters***

- That the ‘Resource List’ on the Board’s website be developed further and maintained.
- That it be clearly stated in the support document and the principal’s package that the units of work are not mandatory.

- That information about the professional development needs of teachers expressed during the consultation, should be conveyed to school system authorities, highlighting those aspects specifically mentioned by teachers: Aboriginal culture and history, general religious education, civics and citizenship education.
- That Board officers meet with representatives of school systems to identify areas where support materials and other resources are planned for development in order to ensure that duplication is avoided and that the needs of all schools are met during the implementation of the syllabus.
- That in addition to reducing the subject matter in the Human Society and Its Environment K–6 Syllabus, the broader issue of time allocations in the K–6 curriculum be examined further, with particular focus on those aspects of curriculum, pedagogy, student welfare and classroom management that contribute to a feeling of curriculum ‘overload’.

# APPENDICES

**Appendix A** Survey instrument

**Appendix B** Discussion agenda

**Appendix C** Focus group meetings – summary information

**Appendix D** School visits (staff interviews) – summary information

**Appendix E** Written submissions – summary of respondents

**Appendix F** Fax-back responses – summary of respondents

**Appendix G** Schools involved in the trialling of the draft documents

**Appendix A**

**SURVEY**

**Human Society and Its Environment K–6 Draft Syllabus  
Human Society and Its Environment K–6 Draft Support Document  
(and Additional Draft Unit Overviews)**

**Purpose of this survey**

The purpose of this survey is to obtain detailed comments on draft documents developed for Human Society and Its Environment K–6.

The development of these documents has been based on recommendations arising out of consultation on the Human Society and Its Environment K–6 writing brief (June 1997). The questions in this survey have been based on these recommendations.

Please send your completed survey to:

**Alison Haylock  
Primary Administrative Officer  
Board of Studies  
Curriculum Branch  
PO Box 5300  
SYDNEY 2001**

**by 31 July 1998.**

If you would like feedback about changes made to the documents as the result of survey responses, please provide the following contact information:

Name .....

Address .....

..... Postcode .....

Phone ..... Fax .....

Thank you for completing this survey.

## Section A: General Information

Please circle the number corresponding to the most appropriate response.

### 1. Type of organisation:

Infants school	1
Primary school	2
Primary/Secondary combined school	3
High school	4
University	5
Professional association	6
Parent group	7
Community group	8
Other (please specify).....	9

### 2. Location:

Metropolitan area	1
Non-metropolitan town/city	2
Rural area	3
Other (please specify).....	4

### 3. This response is:

<b>a) A group response:</b>	Yes/No
Number in group:	
Less than 5	1
5-10	2
Greater than 10.....	3
<b>b) An individual response:</b>	Yes/No

#### 4. For individual responses only

##### a) Total number of years teaching

Have not taught	1
Less than 3 years	2
3–5 years	3
6–10 years	4
11–15 years	5
16–20 years	6
More than 20 years.....	7

##### b) Position

###### School based

Executive (non-teaching)	1
Executive (teaching)	2
Classroom teacher	3
Specialist (eg ESL, STLD, Library)	4
Support (eg Aide)	5
Other (please specify).....	6

###### Non-school based

(please specify).....	7
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#### 5. For schools only

##### a) Type of school

Government school	1
Non-government systemic school	2
Independent school.....	3

**b) Size of school**

Less than 50 students	1
50-150	2
150-300	3
300-600	4
More than 600.....	5

**c) Nature of school (you may circle more than one)**

Co-educational	1
Girls only	2
Boys only	3
DSP funded	4
Special Education Program school.....	5

**d) Proportion of students with language backgrounds other than English**

Less than 25%	1
25-50%	2
51-75%	3
More than 75%.....	4

**e) Number of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students**

Please specify number of ATSI students .....

## Section B (i): Human Society and Its Environment K–6 Draft Syllabus

Please indicate your response by circling the most appropriate number. More detailed responses to any of the questions in Section B (i) may be recorded in Section B (ii).

<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neither</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>

### Aspects of the Draft Syllabus

#### 1. Introduction

*The purpose of the Introduction is to summarise features of the syllabus.*

- |   |          |          |          |          |                   |
|---|----------|----------|----------|----------|-------------------|
| <b>1.1 The Introduction achieves this.</b>                            | <b>1</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>4</b> | <b>5</b>          |
| <b>1.2 The Introduction is written in clear and concise language.</b> |          | <b>1</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>4</b> <b>5</b> |

#### 2. Rationale

*The purpose of the Rationale is to explain the place of Human Society and Its Environment in the primary curriculum.*

- |  |          |          |          |          |                   |
|--|----------|----------|----------|----------|-------------------|
| <b>2.1 The Rationale achieves this.</b>                            | <b>1</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>4</b> | <b>5</b>          |
| <b>2.2 The Rationale is written in clear and concise language.</b> |          | <b>1</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>4</b> <b>5</b> |

#### 3. Aim

*The Aim is to state the overall purpose of Human Society and Its Environment K–6.*

- |  |          |          |          |          |          |
|--|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| <b>3.1 The Aim is appropriate for Human Society and Its Environment K–6.</b> | <b>1</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>4</b> | <b>5</b> |
|--|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|

#### 4. Objectives

*Objectives are intended to provide broad statements of the knowledge and understandings, skills and values and attitudes of Human Society and Its Environment K–6.*

- |  |          |          |          |          |          |
|--|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| <b>4.1 The Objectives are appropriate for Human Society and Its Environment K–6.</b> | <b>1</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>4</b> | <b>5</b> |
|--|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|

## 5. Overview of Learning in Human Society and Its Environment

*The purpose of the overview of learning in Human Society and Its Environment section is to provide information about the approach taken in the syllabus.*

**5.1 The Overview of Learning in Human Society and Its Environment achieves this.** 1 2 3 4 5

**5.2 The Overview of Learning in Human Society and Its Environment is written in clear and concise language.** 1 2 3 4 5

## 6. Stage Outcomes and Indicators

*Outcomes are intended to provide clear statements of the knowledge and understandings, skills and values and attitudes to be developed by students as they progress through schooling.*

**6.1 The Outcomes achieve this.** 1 2 3 4 5

*The Indicators have been developed to assist teachers in monitoring student progress within a stage and in making on-balance judgements about the achievement of outcomes at the end of a stage.*

**6.2 The Indicators achieve this.** 1 2 3 4 5

## 7. Content

*The content outlines what is to be taught in each stage.*

**7.1 The Content Overviews (pages 44 to 68) provide adequate guidance for what should be taught in each stage.** 1 2 3 4 5

*The quantity of subject matter in each stage should not exceed what could be reasonably managed in school plans and class programs.*

**7.2 The subject matter for Early Stage 1 (page 45) can be reasonably covered in this stage.** 1 2 3 4 5

**7.3 The subject matter for Stage 1 (page 51) can be reasonably covered in this stage.** 1 2 3 4 5

**7.4 The subject matter for Stage 2 (page 57) can**

be reasonably covered in this stage. 1 2 3 4 5

7.5 The subject matter for Stage 3 (page 63) can be reasonably covered in this stage. 1 2 3 4 5

*The Implications for Learning and Teaching have been developed to provide teachers with more specific direction about what is to be taught.*

- **The Implications for Learning and Teaching for Early Stage 1 (pages 46 to 49) achieve this.** 1 2 3 4 5
- 7.7 **The Implications for Learning and Teaching for Stage 1 (pages 52 to 55) achieve this.** 1 2 3 4 5
- 7.8 **The Implications for Learning and Teaching for Stage 2 (pages 58 to 61) achieve this.** 1 2 3 4 5
- 7.9 **The Implications for Learning and Teaching for Stage 3 (pages 64 to 67) achieve this.** 1 2 3 4 5

## 8. Scope and Sequence of Subject Matter

*The purpose of the Scope and Sequence of Subject Matter is to provide a description of the core subject matter that is to be covered from Early Stage 1 to Stage 3.*

8.1 **The Scope and Sequence of Subject Matter (pages 69 to 77) achieves this.** 1 2 3 4 5

## 9. General Principles for Planning, Programming, Assessing, Reporting and Evaluating

*The purpose of the General Principles for Planning, Programming, Assessing, Reporting and Evaluating is to provide some basic principles to guide teachers' use of the outcomes and content.*

9.1 **The General Principles for Planning, Programming, Assessing, Reporting and Evaluating section achieves this.** 1 2 3 4 5

## 10. Glossary

*The glossary has two purposes:*

- i) to provide teachers and parents with definitions for terms used in the syllabus and*
- ii) to provide some background information about people, groups, organisations and events referred to in the syllabus.*

**10.1 The glossary achieves these purposes.** 1 2 3 4 5

**11. Overall impressions of the draft syllabus**

**11.1 The draft syllabus is written in clear and concise language.** 1 2 3 4 5

**11.2 The draft syllabus clearly shows the scope and sequence for learning in Human Society and Its Environment K–6.** 1 2 3 4 5

**11.3 The draft syllabus provides direction for developing teaching practices in Human Society and Its Environment K–6.** 1 2 3 4 5

**11.4 The draft syllabus clearly incorporates general religious education.** 1 2 3 4 5

*The Introduction states that the draft syllabus incorporates gender, Aboriginal, citizenship, multicultural, environmental, work and global perspectives.*

**11.5 The draft syllabus clearly incorporates these perspectives.** 1 2 3 4 5



## Section C (i): Human Society and Its Environment K–6 Draft Support Document (and Additional Unit Overviews)

Please indicate your response by circling the most appropriate number. More detailed responses to any of the questions in Section C (i) may be recorded in Section C (ii).

<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neither</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>

### Aspects of the draft support document

#### **12. Sample School Plans for Human Society and Its Environment**

*The purpose of the sample school plans for Human Society and Its Environment section (pages 15 to 21 in the draft support document) is to provide schools with some options for school planning using the unit overviews to ensure that students have access to the content and outcomes of the syllabus from Kindergarten to Year 6.*

**12.1 The Sample School Plans for Human Society and Its Environment section (pages 15 to 21) achieves this.**

**1 2 3 4 5**

#### **13. Unit Overviews**

*The unit overviews have been developed to provide schools and teachers with a set of units that incorporate the content and outcomes from the syllabus from each stage.*

*These unit overviews should be stage appropriate and support teachers in developing their programs.*

**13.1 The Unit Overviews for Early Stage 1 are stage appropriate.**

**1 2 3 4 5**

**13.2 The Unit Overviews for Early Stage 1 will support teachers in developing their programs.**

**1 2 3 4 5**

<b>13.3</b>	<b>The Unit Overviews for Stage 1 are stage appropriate.</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>13.4</b>	<b>The Unit Overviews for Stage 1 will support teachers in developing their programs.</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>13.5</b>	<b>The Unit Overviews for Stage 2 are stage appropriate.</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>13.6</b>	<b>The Unit Overviews for Stage 2 will support teachers in developing their programs.</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>13.7</b>	<b>The Unit Overviews for Stage 3 are stage appropriate.</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>13.8</b>	<b>The Unit Overviews for Stage 3 will support teachers in developing their programs.</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>

## **14. Teaching Strategies and Practices in Human Society and Its Environment**

*the teaching strategies and practices section has been developed to provide teachers with advice on strategies and practices referred to in the unit overviews.*

<b>14.1</b>	<b>The Teaching Strategies and Practices in Human Society and Its Environment section achieves this.</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
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Appendix B

**DISCUSSION AGENDA**

1. What would you like to say about the design and layout of each document?
2. What would you like to say about the amount of direction and information provided in the draft syllabus?
3. What would you like to say about the way content is described and presented in the draft syllabus?
4. Core subject matter has been developed for each stage. What would you like to say about the subject matter (in terms of quantity; relevance; scope)?
5. What would you like to say about the relationship between what you are teaching now (and what the students are learning) in HSIE and the direction taken in the draft syllabus?
6. The unit overviews in the support document have been developed to assist teachers in planning class programs. How helpful do you find:  
i) The information in the teaching notes section? ii) The units themselves?
7. What other comments would you like to make about any or all of the documents?

Appendix C

**FOCUS GROUP MEETINGS**

<b>Location</b>	<b>Venue</b>	<b>Participants</b>
<i>Glenn Innes</i>	<i>Glenn Innes RSL Club</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>Parkes</i>	<i>Parkes RSL Club</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Wollongong</i>	<i>Wollongong Catholic Club</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>Northern Beaches</i>	<i>Manly Warringah Rugby League Club</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>South West Sydney</i>	<i>Liverpool Catholic Club</i>	<i>6</i>

**Appendix D**

**SCHOOL VISITS**  
**(STAFF INTERVIEWS)**

<b>Location</b>	<b>Venue</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Participants</b>
<i>Tyalla Public School</i>	<i>Coffs Harbour</i>	<i>July 22</i>	<i>25 teachers 1 Principal</i>
<i>Uralla Central School</i>	<i>Uralla</i>	<i>July 27</i>	<i>11 teachers 1 Principal</i>
<i>St Patrick's Primary School</i>	<i>Griffith</i>	<i>July 29</i>	<i>30 teachers 1 Principal</i>
<i>Russell Lea Infants School</i>	<i>Drummoyne</i>	<i>August 4</i>	<i>6 teachers 1 Principal</i>
<i>North Rocks Public School</i>	<i>North Rocks</i>	<i>August 5</i>	<i>20 teachers 1 Principal</i>

## Appendix E

### WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS

No.	NAME	INSTITUTION/ORGANISATION
1	<i>Graham Spindler, Acting Manager</i>	Parliamentary Education and Community Relations The Parliament of NSW
2	<i>Robin Hall</i>	Social Education team Charles Sturt University, Bathurst
3	<i>Tony Hepworth</i>	Charles Sturt University, Wagga Wagga
4	<i>Grahame Collier, Manager Education</i>	Environment Protection Authority
5	<i>Bronwyn Cole</i>	Faculty of Education, University of Western Sydney, Macarthur
6	<i>Jill Dempster, Assistant Director Education</i>	Australian Electoral Commission
7	<i>John Hennessy, General Secretary</i>	NSW Teachers Federation
8	<i>Jenny Dibley</i>	Brewongle Field Study Centre, Sackville
9	<i>Nigel Parbury</i>	Aboriginal Consultative Group Inc.
10	<i>Jenny Allum, Chair</i>	Association of Heads of Independent Schools of Australia
11	<i>Grant Maple, Director</i>	Anglican Education Commission
12	<i>Keith Dalleywater, Convenor JSHAA Academic Committee</i>	Junior School Heads' Association of Australia (NSW Branch)
13	<i>Jozeffa Sobski, Deputy Director-General (Development and Support)</i>	Department of Education and Training

**Appendix F**

**FAX-BACK RESPONSES**

<b>No.</b>	<b>NAME</b>	<b>INSTITUTION / ORGANISATION</b>
<b>1</b>	Ruth Hutchinson	St Madeleine's Primary School, Kenthurst
<b>2</b>	Michelle Hilder and Ann Milling	St Gerard's Primary School, Carlingford
<b>3</b>	St Mary's Central School, Wellington	St Mary's Central School, Wellington
<b>4</b>	Molong Central School	Molong Central School
<b>5</b>	Technology Consultant	Hornsby District Office
<b>6</b>	Lecturer	University of Newcastle
<b>7</b>	Phillip Nash	Christian Community Schools Ltd
<b>8</b>	Catholic Education Office, Canberra	Catholic Education Office, Canberra
<b>9</b>	Wendy Maher	Parramatta West Primary School
<b>10</b>	Early Childhood Education Council	Early Childhood Education Council
<b>11</b>	Department of Sociology and Anthropology	University of Newcastle
<b>12</b>	Catholic Education Office, Wilcannia-Forbes	Catholic Education Office, Wilcannia-Forbes
<b>13</b>	McAuley Catholic Central School	McAuley Catholic Central School

Appendix G

**SCHOOLS INVOLVED IN THE TRIALLING OF THE  
DRAFT DOCUMENTS**

Annandale North Public School

Artarmon Public School

Australia Street Infants School

Banksmeadow Public School

Blacktown North Public School

Crown Street Public School

Emmerton Public School

Freeman's Reach Public School

Kootingal Public School

Lisarow Public School

Port Macquarie Public School

Orange Grove Public School

Ourimbah Public School

PLC, Croydon

St Kieran's Primary School

Walgett Public School

Westdale Public School

Wiley Park Public School