

'It's Mabo, It's the Constitution, It's the Vibe'

Debates over the 'active citizen' and Aboriginal history

in the NSW History Syllabus in the 1980s and 1990s

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Synopsis

In the 1980s and 1990s, the NSW History Syllabus was subject to debate as varying groups' competed for control over content. This thesis focuses on one aspect of the debate: the steps that led to the inclusion of mandatory Aboriginal history in the 1992 History Syllabus and the responses this generated among the teaching profession and the community in the wider context of the history wars. This thesis argues that these debates about Aboriginal history need to be considered in the context of a renewed push for citizenship education, and the ways in which the NSW History Syllabus engaged with the idea of the 'active citizen'.

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Introduction: Something Profound

A History Syllabus is more than a set of topics to be studied, skills to be learnt, and outcomes to be assessed. It is a cultural tool that has the power to mould and shape the knowledge, attitudes, and the values of future Australian citizens. Because of this, the NSW History Syllabus has been at times a contested site with politicians, teachers, members of the public and special interest groups vying for control over content. This thesis argues that contestation over the NSW History Syllabus in the 1980s and 1990s, particularly the inclusion of mandatory Aboriginal history in the 1992 Syllabus were more complex than disagreements over content. These debates need to be considered in the context of a renewed push for citizenship education and differing opinions on what was meant by the 'active citizen.' Disputes also revolved around the role of historical knowledge and understanding, its implications for the nation and the shaping of cultural identity.

In the period between 1982 and 1998, something profound was happening in the teaching of history in New South Wales Schools with the release of three separate syllabus documents in 1982, 1992 and 1998. The 1982 and the 1992 syllabi reflected revisionist approaches to Australian history, and changing approaches to history teaching. The presuppositions and theoretical foundations, particularly those of the 1992 Syllabus challenged long-held assumptions about the content and teaching of history. Lauded as brilliant and outstanding by some, but denounced as political and unhistorical by others, the 1992 Syllabus was the source of continued debate through the 1990s, which ultimately led to the 1998 Syllabus that overturned the bulk of the changes made in 1992. The trajectory of history syllabus change in New South Wales

could therefore be described as a ‘routine’ development in 1982, a ‘revolutionary’ modification in 1992, and a Syllabus in 1998 that ‘rejected’ the changes made in 1992. This thesis focuses on the changes made to the 1992 Syllabus, but also consider the 1982 Syllabus in order to understand the lead up to the significant shift that took place in the 1992 Syllabus. There will be an examination of how these changes occurred, how they were implemented and their reception and debate in the wider context of the history wars.

In *The Opening of the American Mind*, Lawrence Levine examined the history of changes in the university curriculum in response to contemporary debate about the role of studying the humanities in the curriculum. New approaches to teaching the humanities and the inclusion of alternative areas of study had resulted in substantial changes to the traditional curriculum. This sparked outrage among largely conservative critics who viewed these changes, particularly the removal of core units on western civilisation, as a disturbing threat to a universal, timeless, accessible historical canon.¹ There was apprehension that these changes would result in social and cultural calamity.² Regarding the historical canon, Levine argued that although there had been a traditional acceptance that history was open to different interpretations from generation to generation, history still revolved around the study of ‘well-agreed-upon standard events’ that formed the basis of the historical canon. The inclusion of previously ‘uncharted areas of history,’ such as the history of women or African Americans expanded historical discourse, but caused fierce resistance, discomfort and accusations of ‘political correctness’ as it simultaneously questioned

¹ Lawrence W. Levine, *The Opening of the American Mind: Canons, Culture and History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996), pp. 98-99.

² Levine, *The Opening of the American Mind*, p. 11.

which events and people should constitute the historical canon.³ Through an examination of the history of the university curriculum, Levine demonstrated that rather than being a continual feature of the curriculum, ‘canons’ did not reside in a ‘protected galaxy’ as a ‘universal truth’ removed from everyday society. Instead they were ‘products of that culture and both reflect and influence it.’⁴ Therefore rather than challenging and subverting the traditional canon, the history curriculum sought to understand the past in its full complexity by integrating aspects of history previously ignored.⁵

Levine’s work provides a valuable conceptual framework for this investigation. In the 1980s in Australia there was increasing community interest in the nation’s past, and the role history should play, particularly in the lead up to the Bicentenary. There was debate about whether the emphasis should focus on replicating a core body of knowledge that celebrated the Australian achievement, or whether the Bicentenary was the time to focus on the previously neglected histories that challenged this canon. Within this milieu, the NSW Liberal government mandated that every student study 100 hours of Australian history, giving the Syllabus Committee a choice of the form of Australian history they wanted embodied within the Syllabus. Levine’s notion of ‘culture wars’ being about the weakening of a cultural canon is an apt description of the situation in Australia the 1980s and early 1990s. This thesis is a story of syllabus development, government policy and public debate when the Australian historical canon was seen as under attack.

³ Levine, *The Opening of the American Mind*, pp. 96-97.

⁴ Levine, *The Opening of the American Mind*, pp. 68, 91, 99.

⁵ Levine, *The Opening of the American Mind*, prologue.

New areas of historical inquiry found that the traditional narrative of Australia's past had insufficiently considered the role and contribution of groups in society such as women, Aboriginal people and migrants. These new areas of historical research began to reshape and dismantle the way Australian history had previously been understood.⁶ The 'new history' fractured Australia's previously uniform narrative challenging the traditional portrayal of the past. The 1992 NSW History Syllabus reflected the new scholarship. By doing so, however, the content was structured in a radically different way to previous syllabus documents.⁷ This thesis will examine one particular addition to the Syllabus – Aboriginal history, including its origins and purpose in the 1992 History Syllabus and how it was implemented and received in schools in the 1990s.

The study of history in schools had long been entwined with civic and citizenship education in New South Wales and Australia. The study of history assisted students with understanding the origins and development of Australian democracy, and civic institutions such as the Constitution and system of government. From the early twentieth century the history curriculum focussed predominantly on teaching citizenship through British history, Australia's role in the British Empire, and moral training in order to promote national and imperial patriotism.⁸ Courses also included a

⁶ Carmel Young, 'Civics and Citizenship Education and the Teaching of History', *Unicorn* 22, no. 1 (1996), p. 70; Robert Parkes, 'Reading History Curriculum as Postcolonial Text: Towards a Curricular Response to the History Wars in Australia and Beyond', *Curriculum Inquiry* 37, no. 4 (2007), p. 385.

⁷ Carmel Young, 'Civics and Citizenship Education and the Teaching of History', *Unicorn* 22, no. 1 (1996), pp. 64-71; Carmel Young, "Recasting School History: For Better or for Worse?" *Public History Review* 7 (1998), pp. 10-16; Alan Barcan, "History in Decay." *Quadrant* July-August (1999); Robert Parkes, 'Reading History Curriculum as Postcolonial Text: Towards a Curricular Response to the History Wars in Australia and Beyond', *Curriculum Inquiry* 37, no. 4 (2007), p. 385.

⁸ Julian Thomas, 'The History of Civics Education in Australia', in Civics Expert Group, *Whereas the People: Civics and Citizenship Education* (Australian Government Publishing Service, 1994), p. 162; P. Musgrave, 'How Should We Make Australians?', *Curriculum Perspectives* 14, no. 3 (1994), pp. 11-18; Kerry J. Kennedy, 'Conflicting Conceptions of Citizenship and Their Relevance for the School Curriculum', in Murray Print, ed., *Civics and Citizenship Education: Issues from Practice and Research (ASCA Teaching Resource No. 8)* (Belconnen: Australian Curriculum Studies Association, 1995), p. 13; Murray Print, 'Context and Change in Civics Education', in Murray Print, ed., *Civics and Citizenship Education: Issues from Practice and Research (ASCA Teaching Resource No. 8)*

biographical element, whereby students studied ‘noted citizens’ as examples of civic virtue and to inspire awe.⁹ The post-war period witnessed the decline of formalised civics and citizenship instruction, and by the 1960s, history in New South Wales became less concerned with formal civic instruction.¹⁰ In the 1980s and 1990s, citizenship was again seen to be an important part of the school curriculum and was placed back on the public agenda. This occurred at a time when the nature of Australian democratic citizenship was in need of restatement, including the need for discussion about the strengthening of civic values.

An element of history that has been overlooked is not just what students should *know* about the past, but what they should *do* with the historical knowledge and skills that are developed through the study of Australia’s history. This is where the question of citizenship is essential, as membership of a liberal democratic community such as Australia must invariably involve a degree of civic participation.¹¹ The focus of this study is to evaluate how the NSW History Syllabus engaged with the idea of the active citizen, and how that differed or reflected broader concepts of Australian citizenship. Should Australian citizens be politically literate? Should they understand the plight of minority groups and seek to redress past wrongs, or simply have the skills to contribute to Australian society? And what should these skills be? Hence, an aim of this study is to examine the intersection between broader debates about civics

(Belconnen: Australian Curriculum Studies Association, 1995), p. 7; Peter Wilson, *The Politics of History within New South Wales Schools: The Contentious Nature of History Courses from 1880 to the Present*, *Master of Arts (Research) Thesis* (Sydney: The University of Sydney, 2010); Graeme Davison, *The Use and Abuse of Australian History* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 2000), pp. 187-190.

⁹ Thomas, ‘The History of Civics Education in Australia’, p. 166.

¹⁰ Wilson, *The Politics of History within New South Wales Schools*, pp. 18-19.

¹¹ David Held, ‘Between State and Civil Society: Citizenship’, in *Citizenship*, Geoff Andrews, ed., (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1991), pp. 19-20.

and citizenship and the new importance given to the study of Australian history in New South Wales.

Over the past decades, Australian history has been subject to intense scrutiny, debate and ideological manoeuvring. These 'history wars' revolved around the redefinition of historical knowledge, the validity of different interpretations and determining the role that history should or should not play in shaping Australia's national identity.¹² Debate was further complicated by accusations of ideological bias, of 'political correctness' and divided opinions on the role of the national history in shaping the present and the future. The tenor of the debate was often polarised between two positions, and meant that discussion reverted to accusations and misrepresentation, rather than an informative discourse.

A primary area of concern of the history wars was the representation of Aboriginal people. Early on, works such as *The Other Side of the Frontier* by Henry Reynolds argued that Aboriginal people violently resisted European colonisers, demonstrating that there was more conflict on the frontier than had been previously considered by historians.¹³ There was a flow of revisionist scholarship that endeavoured to portray Aboriginal people as historical agents, which 'stimulated new ways of looking at the national past.'¹⁴ The designers of the 1992 History Syllabus believed that they had a

¹² Stuart Macintyre & Anna Clark, *The History Wars* (Carlton: University of Melbourne Press, 2003); Stuart Macintyre, 'The History Wars', *Teaching History* 38, no. 2 (2004), pp. 4-14; Ann Curthoys & John Docker, *Is History Fiction?* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2006); Andrew Bonnell & Martin Crotty, 'An Australian 'Hirtorikerstreit'?', *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 50, no. 3 (2004), pp. 425-433; Keith Windshuttle, *The Fabrication of Aboriginal History* (Paddington: Macleay Press, 2002)..

¹³ Henry Reynolds, *The Other Side of the Frontier* (Ringwood: Penguin Books, 1981).

¹⁴ Bain Attwood, *Aboriginal History* (1995), p. 35. See also: Bain Attwood, *Telling the Truth About Aboriginal History* (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2005); Peggy Brock, 'Skirmishes in Aboriginal History', *Aboriginal History* 28 (2004), pp. 207-25; Lorenzo Veracini, 'Of a 'Contested Ground' and an 'Indelible Stain': A Difficult Reconciliation between Australia and Its Aboriginal History During the 1990s and 2000s', *Aboriginal History* 27 (2003), pp. 224-39.

responsibility to reflect the new historiography, despite its socially contentious nature. There was an additional purpose however, which was the powerful role new histories could play in assisting alienated students such as Aboriginal students to become active citizens, and thus help to better Australian society.¹⁵ History had a powerful role in illuminating present issues, which the 1992 Syllabus emphasised, outlining that the core aim of the entire Syllabus was to ‘develop a sense of historical perspective and gain an understanding of the present through the past.’¹⁶ Despite not having the same prominence as the 1992 Syllabus, the 1982 Syllabus, nonetheless, contended that an important aspect of studying history in school was that it helped students understand the present.¹⁷

By the late 1980s and early 1990s, the burgeoning Aboriginal historiography was condemned by conservative critics, who believed that the new history portrayed an unnecessarily grim view of the past. There was also a concern that these histories were not about understanding the past in their own terms, but were motivated by ‘current political fashions.’¹⁸ For instance, in 1988 John Hirst argued that the new histories were written as part of a ‘radical’ agenda that aimed to portray an unnecessarily negative picture of Australian history.¹⁹ New historiography was considered ideologically-laden and politically-motivated, whereas traditional history was considered neutral, and simply a recounting of the facts.²⁰ In 1992, Geoffrey

¹⁵ Henry Reynolds, *Why Weren't We Told? A Personal Search for the Truth About Our History* (Ringwood, Victoria: Viking, 1999).

¹⁶ New South Wales Board of Studies, *History Syllabus Years 7-10* (North Sydney: Author, 1992). See also: Carmel Young, ‘The Place of History in the School Curriculum’, *Teaching History* 24, no. 4 (1991), pp. 34-36.

¹⁷ Secondary Schools Board, *Syllabus in History Years 7-10* (Sydney: Author, 1982); Bryan Cowling, *Interviewed by Michael Condie* (Sydney, 16 August, 2012, (in author’s possession).

¹⁸ Ken Baker, ‘The New History’, *IPA Review* 42, no. 3 (1988/1989), p. 50.

¹⁹ John Hirst, ‘The Blackening of Our Past’ *IPA Review* 42, no. 3 (1988), pp. 49-54.

²⁰ Robert Parkes, ‘Reading History Curriculum as Postcolonial Text: Towards a Curricular Response to the History Wars in Australia and Beyond’, *Curriculum Inquiry* 37, no. 4 (2007), p. 388.

Blainey warned that a 'black armband' view of history had assailed the generally optimistic view of Australia's past, and that many young Australians were proud to be Australian. However, they would be deprived of their 'inheritance' with continual claims that there was little to be proud of.²¹ The black armband debate was less about the facts of history, than about how Australians should respond to the past, and whether the positive or negative aspects of the past should be emphasised.²² The school curriculum was an arena of concern, with one of the original areas of contention being the 'invasion' versus 'settlement' debate.²³ Although the image of the 'black armband' would come to dominate discourse about public representations of Australian history from the mid-1990s, the term itself was not a feature of the debate in the period being studied. It would therefore be inappropriate to characterise the discussion in the early 1990s as 'black armband' even if features of the disputation contained similar elements of subsequent debate.

These historiographical and methodological changes in the NSW History Syllabi occurred at the same time as changes in pedagogy. From the 1970s there was a move away from history being prescriptive, chronologically based and passively learnt to student-centred and inquiry-based learning. Influenced by the work of the Schools Council History 13-16 Project in Britain, students were exposed to different historical perspectives, and encouraged to construct their own understanding of the past by

²¹ Geoffrey Blainey, 'Drawing up a Balance Sheet of Our History', *Quadrant* 37, no. 7-8 (1993), pp. 11-15.

²² Mark McKenna, *Different Perspectives on Black Armband History: Research Paper 5* (Canberra: Parliament of Australia, Parliamentary Library, 1997). See also: Anna Clark, 'History in Black and White: a critical analysis of the black armband debate', *Public Intellectual Forum* 75 (2002), pp. 1-11.

²³ Bruce Dennet, 'Keith Windschuttle's Black and White Fallacy', *Teaching History* 38, no. 3 (2004), pp. 4-17; Anna Clark, *Teaching the Nation: Politics and Pedagogy in Australian History* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2006), p. 14.

piecing together evidence from source material.²⁴ This form of teaching history would assist with developing transferrable critical thinking skills, and aid student enjoyment of history. The 1992 History Syllabus firmly embedded this constructivist model of teaching. Departing from the traditional narrative structure, the Syllabus was questioned-centred and inquiry-based with an emphasis on historical problems and issues.²⁵ Recognising that there was a range of contested versions of the past told from different perspectives, the Syllabus asserted that through the skills of problem solving, research, and evaluating and interpreting evidence, students would develop critical thinking skills that enabled them to consider different perspectives, reasoned hypotheses and form their own 'balanced judgement' on past events.²⁶ The Syllabus also granted teachers immense flexibility in how they approached the content in the classroom in order to cater the content to the needs of students in the classroom.²⁷ Although the 1992 Syllabus structure was radically different from previous syllabi, it was nonetheless building upon changes that had been occurring in Syllabi over the previous decade. Although the 1982 History Syllabus was not structured around inquiry questions, historical skills were to be integrated in all areas of study.²⁸

²⁴ For a detailed discussion of the impact of the Schools Council 13-16 project see Peter Wilson, *The Politics of History within New South Wales Schools: The Contentious Nature of History Courses from 1880 to the Present*, *Master of Arts (Research) Thesis* (Sydney: The University of Sydney, 2010), Chapter 4 and Anna Clark, *Teaching the Nation: Politics and Pedagogy in Australian History* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2006), Chapter 4.

²⁵ Carmel Young, 'A Walk through the New Years 7-10 Syllabus', *Teaching History* 26, no. 4 (1992), p. 24; New South Wales Board of Studies, *History Syllabus Years 7-10* (North Sydney: Author, 1992).

²⁶ New South Wales Board of Studies, *History Syllabus Years 7-10* (North Sydney: Author, 1992), p. 2.

²⁷ Member of the 1992 History Syllabus Committee, *Interviewed by Michael Condie* (Sydney, 7 August, 2012, (in author's possession); Kate Keeley, *Interviewed by Michael Condie* (Sydney, 3 August, 2012, (in author's possession); Carmel Young, 'A Walk through the New Years 7-10 Syllabus', *Teaching History* 26, no. 4 (1992), p. 26.

²⁸ Secondary Schools Board, *Syllabus in History Years 7-10* (Sydney: Author, 1982), pp. 4, 6, 9; David Stewart, 'History Textbooks and the New History 7-10 Syllabus', *Teaching History* 16, no. 3 (1982), p. 58; Gary Johnston, 'An Historical Perspective of the 1980 Syllabus in History for Years 7-10', *Teaching History* 15, no. 4 (1982), pp. 65-80; Bryan Cowling, *Interviewed by Michael Condie* (Sydney, 16 August, 2012, (in author's possession); Bryan Cowling, 'Challenging Teacher's Resistance to Change', *The Australian History Teacher* 10 (1984), pp. 18-21.

The new way of teaching history where historical knowledge was presented as contested and open to different interpretations challenged traditional interpretations of the past, and became one of the reasons for public concern over the History Syllabus.²⁹ Additionally, the absence of prescribed content in the 1992 Syllabus caused concern among conservative historians, educationalists and politicians. They held that the new emphasis on historical skills meant that history no longer transmitted essential aspects of the national narrative.³⁰

A feature that further complicated the implementation of the NSW History Syllabus was that it existed in a broader educational system with its own specific aims and desires.³¹ Education had become increasingly geared towards the utilitarian needs of the state and all subjects had to justify their relevance in the curriculum within an economic and social climate that was increasingly geared towards vocationalism. Developments in the social sciences resulted in a questioning of whether history should remain as a discrete subject in the curriculum. This meant that supporters of history, who had traditionally assumed its inherent value in the curriculum, were forced to articulate the unique contribution the study of history made to society. The 1982 History Syllabus was created in part out of the need to construct a clear rationale of the benefits of studying history—for the individual and for society at large.³²

²⁹ Graeme Davidson, *The Use and Abuse of Australian History*. St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 2000; Paula Hamilton & Paul Ashton, 'History Wars in Australian High Schools', *Journal of Australian Studies* 91 (2007), pp. 45-57; Carmel Young, "Recasting School History: For Better or for Worse?" *Public History Review* 7 (1998), p. 10.

³⁰ Bob Carr, 'Carr on History', *Teaching History* 29, no. 4 (1995), pp. 18-19; Alan Barcan, 'History in Decay', *Quadrant* 43, no. 7-8 (1999), pp. 45-55; Alan Barcan, 'Education - the Thirty Years' War', *Quadrant* 43, no. 2 (1999), pp. 80-82.

³¹ Kerry Kennedy, Owen Watts & Gilbert McDonald (eds.), *Citizenship Education for a New Age* (Toowoomba: USQ Press, 1993), p. 2.

³² History Syllabus Committee, 'History and Core Curriculum: A Response to *Core Curriculum for Australian Schools*', *Teaching History* 15, no. 3 (1981), p. 57; Gary Johnston, 'An Historical Perspective of the 1980 Syllabus in History for Years 7-10', *Teaching History* 15, no. 4 (1982), p. 71; Bryan Cowling, *Interviewed by Michael Condie* (Sydney, 16 August, 2012, (in author's possession).

The most pronounced threat to History in the period under consideration was the release of *Excellence and Equity: a White Paper on Curriculum Reform in New South Wales Schools* in 1989 by the NSW Ministry of Education and Youth Affairs. The impetus for *Excellence and Equity* was to ensure that the NSW education system produced students with the knowledge, attitudes and ‘essential skills’ relevant for participation in the workforce in the context of rapid social change and to meet the ‘broad economic aspirations of the nation.’³³ One of the reforms was the division of schooling into Key Learning Areas (KLA) rather than specific subjects. History was integrated into ‘Human Society and its Environment’ (HSIE) KLA along with Geography. Although Australian history was given greater prominence with the recommendation that mandated the study of 100 hours of Australian history, *Excellence and Equity* was equivocal about whether this would be taught through a distinct history course, or through a combined Australian Studies Course.³⁴

History as a discrete subject was perceived to be under siege, and the History Teachers Association began what could be described as a propaganda campaign of poster production, newspaper writing and politicking about why History should remain a subject in the curriculum.³⁵ The argument was that the knowledge and skills procured through History had a unique contribution to make to a child's education.

³³ New South Wales. Ministry of Education and Youth Affairs, *Excellence and Equity: New South Wales Curriculum Reform: A White Paper on Curriculum Reform in New South Wales* (Sydney, 1989), pp. 9-10; Brian Fletcher, ‘History, the School and the University’, *The Australian History Teacher* 15 (1988), p. 9.

³⁴ New South Wales Ministry of Education and Youth Affairs, *Excellence and Equity*, pp. 17, 38-39, 72.

³⁵ Dianne Hennessy, ‘President's Report Presented to the Annual General Meeting of the History Teachers' Association of N.S.W. 11 March 1989’, *Teaching History* 23, no. 1 (1989), pp. 3-4; Member of the 1992 History Syllabus Committee, *Interviewed by Michael Condie* (Sydney, 7 August, 2012, (in author's possession); Carmel Young, ‘Recent Politics of History Syllabus Development in New South Wales’, in Kerry Kennedy et al., eds., *Citizenship Education for a New Age* (Toowoomba: University of Southern Queensland Printery, 1993), pp. 29-46.

Historical knowledge was regarded as essential for all students because an understanding of the past was considered indispensable to understand present society, and their place within it. Crucially, there was no appeal to the need to transmit a core canon of historical knowledge. Although content was important, equally so were historical skills, which could assist with future employment, and were considered to have a unique and powerful role in shaping informed perspectives about the present day.³⁶ Although history remained a separate subject in the 1992 Syllabus, anxiety about the position of history in schools remained through the 1990s. There was considerable anxiety among history teachers that their subject was in decline, and they would be forced to continue to justify why history should remain a discrete subject. Central to their argument was an appeal to the importance of historical skills—research methodologies and historical analysis—as history’s unique contribution to student learning.³⁷

Previous studies have considered debates about the school curriculum at the national level. The key historical study of the history syllabus over the last thirty years is Anna Clark’s *Teaching the Nation*. Clark argued that disputes over the syllabus resulted

³⁶ History Teachers Association of NSW Executive, ‘Response to the Discussion Paper on Curriculum in N.S.W. Schools’, *Teaching History* 23, no. 1 (1989), pp. 20-23; Russell Cowie, ‘History as a Useful School Subject’, *The Australian History Teacher* 16 (1989), pp. 5-16. History Teachers Association of Australia, ‘Editorial’, *Teaching History* 24, no. 3 (1990), p. 1; Albert Marchetto, ‘History, "Excellence and Equity" And...’, *Teaching History* 24, no. 3 (1990), pp. 18-20; Carmel Young, ‘The Place of History in the School Curriculum’, *Teaching History* 24, no. 4 (1991), pp. 34-36; History Teachers Association of NSW Executive, ‘HTA Response to the Board of Studies Implementation of Curriculum Initiatives May 1991’, *Teaching History* 25, no. 2 (1991), pp. 39-40; Young, Carmel, ‘Presidential Report - a Few Reflections on the State Conference and History in General’, *Teaching History* 26, no. 2 (1992), p. 3; Carmel Young, ‘Recent Politics of History Syllabus Development in New South Wales’, in Kerry Kennedy et al., eds., *Citizenship Education for a New Age* (Toowoomba: University of Southern Queensland Printery, 1993), pp. 29-46; Peter McPhee, ‘The Historical Profession and Public Discourse’, *Teaching History* 31, no. 1 (1997), pp. 24-29.

³⁷ Lynne Goodwin, ‘HTA National Conference...History - Is It Critical?’, *Teaching History* 26, no. 4 (1992), pp. 22-23; Nikki Tunica, ‘President's Report, Annual General Meeting, March 1994’, *Teaching History* 28, no. 1 (1994), p. 3; Garriock Duncan, ‘History, Historians in an Age of Anxiety’, *Teaching History* 26, no. 1 (1992), pp. 41-46; Albert Marchetto, ‘What Is History’, *Teaching History* 28, no. 4 (1994), pp. 16-20; Christine Halse, et al, ‘The State of History in NSW Secondary Schools’, *Teaching History* 28, no. 4 (1994), pp. 21-26.

from contrasting views of what happened, and conflicting opinions about the purpose of the nation's history. The disagreements over content were complicated by debates over the changing methodologies of teaching history, revealing a tension between history as core historical knowledge and as an approach to teaching and learning.³⁸

Graeme Davison wrote out of a concern for reasserting the place of history in the school curriculum, in the question of the changing relationship between history taught in schools, civic education and nationalism. Davison argued that it was the loss of narrative replaced by a focus on skills that weakened the discipline of history. Davison also argued that the demand for improvements in history education was based on a desire to reinforce a common identity and national purpose.³⁹ More recently, Paula Hamilton and Mark Ashton argued that debates about history in schools were the result of differing opinions as to what constituted historical knowledge.⁴⁰

This thesis builds upon this scholarship by focussing on steps that led to the inclusion of mandatory Aboriginal history in a revisionist History Syllabus in New South Wales, and the different responses this generated among the teaching profession and within the community. A further aspect that distinguishes this study from others is an examination of the history syllabus in the context of a new awareness of the importance of teaching civics and citizenship to school students, and an analysis of competing conceptions of what active citizenship should mean and the role history should play in the formation of citizens.

³⁸ Anna Clark, *Teaching the Nation: Politics and Pedagogy in Australian History* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2006).

³⁹ Graeme Davison, *The Use and Abuse of Australian History* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 2000).

⁴⁰ Paula Hamilton, & Paul Ashton, 'History Wars in Australian High Schools', *Journal of Australian Studies* 91 (2007), pp. 45-57; Paula Hamilton & Paul Ashton, *History at the Crossroads: Australians and the Past* (Ultimo: Halstead Press, 2010).

Historians have also examined changes and debates about the syllabus specific to the New South Wales context. Anna Clark argued that debates about history in New South Wales should be understood as a contest between the goals of the state with the goal of individual development of history students, and that this forced teachers and syllabus developers to continually adopt the rhetoric of relevance.⁴¹ This provided a compelling framework to build upon, in order to understand politics of control over syllabus content. Tracing the complete history of the NSW history syllabus, Peter Wilson argued that the traditional purpose of history to transmit a canon of knowledge to instil patriotism or moral training was replaced by constructivist principles. He suggested that by the 1990s, there were two polarised perspectives on history emerging; one that supported the development of critical thinking skills and the other that supported the traditional role of history in conveying a canon of knowledge.⁴² I build upon Wilson's research to suggest that although there was polarised debate, it was not as simple as 'skills' versus 'knowledge.' The missing dimension was 'what' knowledge, 'what' skills and what students should do in response.

Many of the historians and academics that were writing about the debates over school history were directly involved with the history they were writing about. They were either working with teachers, providing material for them to use in the classroom, or were active participants in the debates. This created the interesting dilemma of whether to treat this material as primary or secondary sources. Carmel Young was the Chair of the 1992 Syllabus Committee, and had written extensively about the purpose

⁴¹ Anna Clark, 'Progress of the Past? History in New South Wales Secondary Schools, 1972-1999', *Public History Review* 9 (2000), pp. 106-120.

⁴² Peter Wilson, 'The Politics of History within New South Wales Schools: The Contentious Nature of History Courses from 1880 to the Present', MA(Research) Thesis, The University of Sydney, 2010.

of school history, its relationship with civics and citizenship and the process of Syllabus development in New South Wales. Her work was vital in assisting with an understanding of the aims and aspirations of the 1992 Syllabus, and how ‘new history’ contributed to citizenship education. Her analysis of the purpose of school history was engaging, and balanced rather than polemic, but, nonetheless, was borne out of her own position of how school history should be taught. Her perceptions provide valuable material for analysis in this study.⁴³

As Chair of the Civics Expert Group, Stuart Macintyre was influential in reasserting the importance of studying Australian history in schools as a conduit for civics and citizenship education. His analysis of the debate was motivated by a particular concern to re-establish a complex narrative history as an important part of school syllabi across the country.⁴⁴ He also participated in and wrote about the ‘history wars’, contributions that considered why the place of Australian history had become so contested. He suggested that one of the reasons for debate over school history was that students no longer knew the formative events that shaped the nation.⁴⁵

⁴³ Carmel Young, ‘Aboriginal Education and the Teaching of History’, *Teaching History* 21, no. 4 (1987), pp. 9-14; Young, Carmel, Kevin Laws & Michael Horsley, ‘Textbooks and the Teaching of History in Secondary Schools’, *Teaching History* 25, no. 2 (1991), pp. 26-30; Carmel Young, ‘The Place of History in the School Curriculum’, *Teaching History* 24, no. 4 (1991), pp. 34-36; Carmel Young, ‘Presidential Report - a Few Reflections on the State Conference and History in General’, *Teaching History* 26, no. 2 (1992), p. 3; Carmel Young, ‘A Walk through the New Years 7-10 Syllabus’, *Teaching History* 26, no. 4 (1992), pp. 24-27; Carmel Young, ‘Rethinking History - Innovation and Change’, *Teaching History* 27, no. 2 (1993), pp. 3-8; Carmel Young, ‘Civics and Citizenship Education and the Teaching of History’, *Unicorn* 22, no. 1 (1996), pp. 64-71; Carmel Young, ‘Aboriginal Life Stories’, *Teaching History* 31, no. 3 (1997), pp. 12-19; Carmel Young, ‘Recasting School History: For Better or for Worse?’, *Public History Review* 7 (1998).

⁴⁴ Stuart Macintyre, ‘Civics and Citizenship Education and the Teaching of History’, *Unicorn* 22, no. 1 (1996), pp. 59-63; Stuart Macintyre, *The Necessity of History: The Inaugural History Council Lecture* (Sydney: The History Council of NSW, 1996); Stuart Macintyre, ‘The genie and the bottle: Putting history back into the school curriculum’, *Australian Journal of Education* 41, no. 2 (1997), pp. 189-199; Stuart Macintyre, ‘Rejoinder to Alan Barcan’, *Australian Journal of Education* 41 no. 2 (1997), pp. 213-215.

⁴⁵ Stuart Macintyre, ‘The History Wars’, *Teaching History* 38, no. 2 (2004), pp. 4-14.

Henry Reynolds memoir *Why Weren't We Told* was immensely useful, not only as a history of the debate about Aboriginal history, and the inclusion of the term 'invasion' in the Syllabus, but also for Reynolds' reflection on what knowledge students required to be good citizens. His connection between Aboriginal history and white citizenship was a dimension of the discussion about Aboriginal history I explore in chapters two and three.⁴⁶

One of the conceptualisations for this study was inspired by Raymond Williams' *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*. Williams argued that individual words in the general vocabulary of society can have significantly different uses and meanings by diverse groups, connected with particular ways of seeing culture and community. Consideration of specific words—or, 'keywords'—allows an exploration of wider society.⁴⁷ I will also examine the disjuncture between the intended purpose of these words/concepts, and the purpose that was ascribed to them by different stakeholders, including teachers, politicians, the public and interest groups.⁴⁸ I am looking at one word, 'invasion.' This term is relevant because it entered popular usage in the late 1980s, and in the 1990s. Debates over the term 'invasion' reflected competing readings of the past, and became synonymous with opposing political views, providing ammunition for participants in the 'history wars.'⁴⁹ The term 'invasion' also reflected the cultural shift in the history curriculum that had occurred

⁴⁶ Henry Reynolds, *Why Weren't We Told? A Personal Search for the Truth About Our History* (Ringwood, Victoria: Viking, 1999).

⁴⁷ Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (London: Croom Helm, 1976). See also: Tony Bennett, Lawrence Grossberg & Meaghan Morris (eds.), *New Keywords : A Revised Vocabulary of Culture and Society*. Carlton: Blackwell Publishing, 2005.

⁴⁸ Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (London: Croom Helm, 1976).

⁴⁹ Stuart Macintyre & Anna Clark, *The History Wars* (Carlton: University of Melbourne Press, 2003), p. 172.

in the 1980s and 1990s.⁵⁰ This approach also underlies some of the discussions in other chapters. Through such an examination of the term ‘invasion’, it is hoped that there will be a detailed, interesting and enriching discussion about why history in the classroom was contested. This methodology could be also employed on other ‘keywords’ in the syllabus such as multiculturalism, genocide or Republicanism.

In order to evaluate contestation over history in schools, a variety of source material was utilised including Syllabus documents, textbooks, government reports, newspaper articles, teaching journals and oral history. Official Syllabus Documents were consulted in order not only to understand the prescribed content, but also the philosophical, educational, even ideological assumptions underlying each.⁵¹ As mentioned, the 1992 Syllabus is the focus of this investigation, however the 1982 and the 1998 Syllabi were also consulted in order to consider the similarities and differences between each. This analysis assisted with a discussion of whether criticisms were the result of disagreement with the syllabus itself, or a misunderstanding of what the Syllabus was intending to achieve.

An analysis of textbooks from the 1980s to the 1990s have been an important source for this study. They reflected the content of the syllabus, but also the changing educational philosophies underpinning each syllabus. Although emphasis on historical

⁵⁰ Ray Land, ‘Furor over Invasion Text’ : Introduction to the Politics, Players and Process’, in *Invasion and After: A Cast Study in Curriculum Politics*, Ray Land, ed., (Brisbane: Queensland Studies Centre, 1994), p. 2.

⁵¹ New South Wales Board of Studies, *History Syllabus Years 7-10* (North Sydney: Author, 1992); NSW Board of Studies, *Stages 4-5 NSW History Syllabus* (Sydney: Author, 1998); Secondary Schools Board, *Syllabus in History Years 7-10* (Sydney: Author, 1982). The primary focus of this thesis is on the History Syllabus for years 7-10, although aspects of the K-6 curriculum are discussed in chapter three. For the 1998 Syllabus, Stage 4 refers to years 7-8, and Stage 5 refers to years 9-10. For more information, see: K. J. Eltis, *Focusing on Learning: Report of the Review of Outcomes and Profiles in New South Wales Schooling* (Sydney: NSW Department of Training and Education Co-Ordination, 1995).

inquiry and student-centred learning meant that a reliance on the textbook was not considered the most effective teaching tool, the reality was that they continued to be the predominant teaching and learning resource used by teachers.⁵² Furthermore, teaching support material produced by the Board of Studies was examined. These materials received attention from politicians and the media. An in-depth analysis of the resources and their reception by teachers and the public was a useful method to highlight differences between teachers, politicians and the media.

Despite being a stakeholder in the History Syllabus, history teachers were often marginalised in public discussion. Publications by the History Teachers Association, including its journal *Teaching History* and *Newsletter*, were critical sources to ascertain teacher views about history, and how they engaged with wider debates. *Teaching History* was also a source of evidence beyond the teaching profession. Printed speeches, letters, and pieces by historians were published. Although useful, these articles were selected by the HTA, with the bulk of them subscribing to the HTA's view of history. As a source of comparison and to get the national perspective, the journal of the Australian History Teachers Association, *The Australian History Teacher* and the Victorian History Teachers Association, *Agora* were also consulted.

In order to ascertain public attitudes and interpretations of the History Syllabus, newspaper articles from the period were consulted. Sydney-based papers, *The Sydney*

⁵² David Stewart, 'History Textbooks and the New History 7-10 Syllabus', *Teaching History* 16, no. 3 (1982), pp. 58-6; Carmel Young, Kevin Laws & Michael Horsley, "Textbooks and the Teaching of History in Secondary Schools." *Teaching History* 25, no. 2 (1991), pp. 26-30; Carmel Young, Kevin Laws & Michael Horsley, 'Textbook Usage in the Implementation of the New History 7-10 Syllabus: A NSW Perspective', in *Australian Teacher Education Association - 24th Annual Conference Empowering the Professional - Politics, Policy and Practice* (Queensland University of Technology, 1994).

Morning Herald and *The Daily Telegraph*, gave a perspective on how the debate played out in New South Wales. The national newspapers *The Australian* and *The Australian Financial Review* at times reported on debates about history in schools in New South Wales and Australia. Not only did newspapers provide a written record of the debate in the public sphere, they also initiated and shaped these debates. Thus, an examination of *how* the media reported was as important as *what* they reported. Radio interviews and political speeches were also consulted, as were a number of academic journals. Curriculum-wide educational policy documents were consulted in order to understand the broad educational goals of the government. In order to understand the rationale behind the inclusion of revisionist Aboriginal history, several government reports that highlighted the important role of education redressing disadvantage were consulted. Civic literacy was one of the key concerns of the Commonwealth government, and the three major reports they published were studied in detail. Other reports that demonstrated concerns over political literacy were also examined in order to show the extent of the public concern.

Additionally, I conducted four interviews with people who were personally involved in syllabus development. Three of these individuals played an important role in the introduction of mandatory Aboriginal history in the 1992 Syllabus, and the fourth was involved in integrating the pedagogical changes of the 1982 Syllabus. As this is a recent piece of history, I was unable to access documents held by the Board of Studies, so oral history was useful to ascertain what happened, and to enter, as it were, the Board meetings where these issues were discussed. On the basis of my research of documentary sources I devised questions about curriculum development in relation to Aboriginal History, the rationale for studying history, external factors that effected

syllabus development, how history should be taught, the relationship between history and citizenship and public debates about the syllabus.⁵³

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, education for active citizenship was placed on the public agenda, due to immense concern over the low levels of civic knowledge among the population. Chapter one evaluates the relationship between the renewed push for civics and citizenship education, the study of Australian history, and the 1982 and 1992 New South Wales History Syllabus Documents. Although it was *Whereas the People Report* and the 1998 Syllabus that clearly embedded civics and citizenship education with the study of Australian history, I will demonstrate that the 1982 and 1992 Syllabi did not ignore citizenship concerns, they just embodied a different notion of what active citizenship entailed. Therefore discussion around the relationship between history and civics and citizenship needs to be understood in the broader context of debates about Australian citizenship.

Chapter two turns its attention to the introduction of the mandatory study of Aboriginal history in the 1992 History Syllabus. I will show that as well as being included as part of a broad agenda to integrate revisionist historiography of previously neglected groups such as women and migrants, there was another impetus to include the Aboriginal viewpoint: to empower Aboriginal students to become active participants in society. In addition, Aboriginal history was considered essential knowledge for all Australians in order to contribute to the Reconciliation process. A close examination of the Syllabus development process will also reveal the tensions, and disagreements about the role of a history Syllabus.

⁵³ Robert Perks & Alistair Thomson (eds.), *The Oral History Reader (second edition)* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

Chapter three discusses the steps that led to the inclusion of the term ‘invasion’ to describe the arrival of the British in the 1992 History Syllabus and the ensuing public debate. I will show that ‘invasion’ was included in the syllabus to challenge existing attitudes of students as a method to help combat prejudice and racist attitudes towards Aboriginal people in a way that hoped for Reconciliation. Community debate over the term ‘invasion’ often neglected to consider the pedagogy of how history was taught in schools. Rather than indoctrinating students that ‘invasion’ was the only legitimate term to use, it was taught as part of the ‘inquiry-based’ approach of the 1992 Syllabus. This approach placed as much emphasis on how one arrived at ‘historical truth’ as the historical narrative of what happened. Therefore a close examination of the term ‘invasion’ will show how this keyword signified a clash of ideas about the function of history in schools, including opposing views on the place of ‘truth’ in history, whether history taught in schools should be politicised and how schools became a site in the ‘history wars.’

Chapter One: Creating the 'Active' Citizen

Over a five-year period from 1989 to 1994, the Commonwealth Government placed citizenship education on the public agenda through the Senate Reports, *Education for Active Citizenship* released in 1989, a follow up report *Active Citizenship Revisited* released in 1991 and the *Whereas the People Report* released by the Civics Expert Group in 1994.⁵⁴ This was during a period where there were changing and competing expectations of what Australian citizenship entailed. Concern over civic and citizenship was a global phenomenon with economic developments, globalisation and the end of the cold war leading to a strong international demand for civic and citizenship issues.⁵⁵ As the government reports were released, other reports and surveys were published that demonstrated that students had 'alarmingly' low levels of knowledge about Australia's civic institutions.⁵⁶ These findings were accompanied by

⁵⁴ Senate Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training, *Education for Active Citizenship in Australian Schools and Youth Organisations* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1989); Senate Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training, *Active Citizenship Revisited* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1991); Civics Expert Group, *Whereas the People: Civics and Citizenship Education* (Australian Government Publishing Service, 1994).

⁵⁵ Ken Boston, 'Australian History and Citizenship Education', *The Australian History Teacher* 21 (1994), pp. 9-12; Murray Print, 'Context and Change in Civics Education', in Murray Print, ed., *Civics and Citizenship Education: Issues from Practice and Research (ASCA Teaching Resource No. 8)* (Belconnen: Australian Curriculum Studies Association, 1995), pp. 7-12; Stuart Macintyre, 'Civics and Citizenship Education and the Teaching of History', *Unicorn* 22, no. 1 (1996), pp. 59-58; Kennedy, Kerry J, 'Conflicting Conceptions of Citizenship and Their Relevance for the School Curriculum', in Murray Print, ed., *Civics and Citizenship Education: Issues from Practice and Research (ASCA Teaching Resource No. 8)* (Belconnen: Australian Curriculum Studies Association, 1995), p. 13; John Chesterman & Brian Galligan eds., *Defining Australian Citizenship: Selected Documents* (Carlton South: University of Melbourne Press, 1999), pp. 3-5.

⁵⁶ Clive Bean, 'Politics and the Public: Mass attitudes towards the Australian Political System', in Jonathan Kelley & Clive Bean, *Australian Attitudes: Social and political analyses from the National Social Science Survey* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1988), pp. 45-57; ANOP, 'The Australian Community and Its Governments, the Constitution, Citizenship and Civics: Community Knowledge and Understanding', in Civics Expert Group, *Whereas the People: Civics and Citizenship Education* (Australian Government Publishing Service, 1994), pp. 128-160; Centenary of Federation Advisory Committee, *2001: A Report from Australia* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1994); Republic Advisory Committee, *An Australian Republic: The Options – An Overview* (Canberra: Commonwealth Government Printer, 1995); Murray Print, *Political Understanding and Attitudes of Secondary Students* (Canberra: Department of the Senate, 1995); Murray Print, 'Research on Political Literacy as a Basis for Civics Education in Schools', in Murray Print, ed., *Civics and Citizenship*

extensive media hype that expressed concern about the phenomenon of ‘politically ignorant, alienated and apathetic adolescents.’⁵⁷ The Reports made the point that knowledge was a precursor to acting out the civil duty of participation. Hence the concern that without appropriate knowledge, skills and attitudes, students would be unable to fulfil their duty to ‘participate as active and informed citizens in our democratic Australian society.’⁵⁸ Students were not blamed for their lack of civic knowledge; rather the education system was held culpable, and various attempts were made by the Federal government to provide resources, improve teacher training and alter the curriculum so that students would know and understand essential civic knowledge. Although history had a long association with civic education, the Senate Committee did not necessarily consider history to be requisite knowledge for active citizenship, as had been the case.⁵⁹ This changed in 1994 when the Civics Expert Group recommended that a knowledge and understanding of Australian history should be a vital component in any civics and citizenship program.

However the relationship between civics and citizenship education and the New South Wales History Syllabus is more complex than what was described above. Despite widespread agreement that motivating students to ‘participate’ in society was critical, there was no consensus about what participation meant. There were also different conceptions of what ‘effective’ participation entailed, and contrasting opinions as to

Education: Issues from Practice and Research (ASCA Teaching Resource No. 8) (Belconnen: Australian Curriculum Studies Association, 1995), pp. 25-38.

⁵⁷ Warren Prior, ‘‘Just What Is a Good Citizen?’ Political Literacy and the Implications for Teachers of History’, in *Annual Conference of the History Teachers' Association of Australia*. (Adelaide, 1992), p. 3; Ken Boston, ‘Australian History and Citizenship Education’, *The Australian History Teacher* 21 (1994), pp. 9-12.

⁵⁸ Common and Agreed National Goals for Schooling in Australia, (The Hobart Declaration), 1989.

⁵⁹ For a discussion of the historical relationship between history and civics and citizenship see: Julian Thomas, ‘The History of Civics Education in Australia’, in Civics Expert Group, *Whereas the People: Civics and Citizenship Education* (Australian Government Publishing Service, 1994), pp. 162-171; Peter Wilson, ‘The Politics of History within New South Wales Schools: The Contentious Nature of History Courses from 1880 to the Present’, MA(Research) Thesis, The University of Sydney, 2010.

the role history should play in educating for active citizenship. It is these differences that are at the core of understanding the relationship between civics and citizenship education and the NSW History Syllabus in the 1980s and 1990s. Far from ignoring civics and citizenship concerns, during the 1980s the NSW History Syllabus contributed to educating students to be informed and active citizens. This was achieved through the provision of knowledge of the past that enabled students to understand the present, and historical skills that promoted critical thinking that could be applied to a range of issues. The approach, however, differed from the civic-based participation advocated for by 1989 and 1991 Senate reports. Although occupied with the same concern, these two conceptions of active citizenship operated in different spheres, rarely critiquing or interacting with each other. There was some debate and discussion about what democratic participation meant among academics, but this was rarely explored in the public sphere. This changed upon the release of the *Whereas the People* Report in 1994, when the role of history in civics and citizenship education entered was placed firmly on the national agenda with strong political support.

This chapter will begin by examining the *Education for Active Citizenship* and *Active Citizenship Revisited* Senate Reports as they set the agenda for a renewed focus on citizenship education. The type of ‘active participation’ promoted by these reports will be analysed to demonstrate that the Senate Committee’s view of participation was not the only possible definition. Within this framework the 1982 and 1992 History Syllabi will be examined to consider how historical study could aid the development of active citizens. Finally, there will be a discussion of the relationship between Australian history and citizenship education, brought to prominence by the *Whereas the People* report in 1994.

Active Participation Simplified: The Senate Reports

The Senate Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training decided to place on the public agenda the idea of ‘education for active citizenship’ in Australian schools, and youth organisations. The Senate Committee conducted inquiries in 1989 and 1991 to explore an issue they considered to be critical to the quality of Australian democracy, contending that a healthy democracy required ‘active and informed participants.’⁶⁰ A growing sense of alienation, disenfranchisement and apathy towards the political system was considered the core of this problem.⁶¹ The Senate Committee was concerned that citizens lacked the knowledge, skills and attitudes they believed were required to effectively participate in society. This was compounded by a series of other factors that were placing new pressures on the democratic system. These included the increasing power of mass media, narrow labour market requirements, and a growing sense of youth alienation. Additionally, although the Committee did not use the term ‘multiculturalism’, they did report that the increased number of Australians from other societies meant that many were not familiar with Australia’s system of government, or did not come from countries that shared Australia’s democratic traditions.⁶²

⁶⁰ Senate Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training, *Education for Active Citizenship in Australian Schools and Youth Organisations* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1989), pp. 5-8; Senate Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training, *Active Citizenship Revisited* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1991), pp. 3-7.

⁶¹ Clive Bean, ‘Politics and the Public: Mass attitudes towards the Australian Political System’, in Jonathan Kelley & Clive Bean, *Australian Attitudes: Social and political analyses from the National Social Science Survey* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1988), pp. 45-57; Geoffrey Partington, ‘Education for Citizenship in Bicentennial Australia’, *Quadrant* August (1988), pp. 29-35.

⁶² Senate Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training, *Education for Active Citizenship in Australian Schools and Youth Organisations* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1989), p. 8.

The Senate Committee assumed that an understanding of Australian civic institutions was a central requirement for active citizenship. The Committee was perturbed that large numbers of Australians ‘especially the young,’ ‘barely understand the rudiments of the political and governmental systems of their own country.’⁶³ Deficiencies in knowledge included areas such the role of parliament, the purpose of the upper and lower houses, the electoral systems, the role and responsibilities of different levels of government and the practicalities of how to participate in these systems.⁶⁴ The Senate Committee believed that this knowledge void among young Australians had produced a climate of disconnection, confusion and apathy with Australia’s democratic processes. However, the Senate Committee did not equate active citizenship with the knowledge and ability to recite facts about the political system. They considered that an understanding of those elements was essential, but of equal importance was the motivation and capacity to put that knowledge to good use.⁶⁵ Students should be ‘willing and able to translate this belief into action’ across all levels of the political system in order to foster an active commitment to democracy.⁶⁶ The Senate Committee was intent on creating an education program that defeated apathy, and inspired participation.

The challenge, outlined by *Education for Active Citizenship*, was that students had a large chance of completing their schooling without a course that prepared them to be an ‘informed and active participant in the democratic processes of Australian society.’⁶⁷ What was problematic about the Senate Committee’s argument was that their conceptions of ‘active,’ ‘participation’ and ‘democracy’ lacked definitional and

⁶³ Senate Standing Committee, *Education for Active Citizenship*, p. 15.

⁶⁴ Senate Standing Committee, *Education for Active Citizenship*, pp. 9-15.

⁶⁵ Senate Standing Committee, *Education for Active Citizenship*, p. 7, 17.

⁶⁶ Senate Standing Committee, *Education for Active Citizenship*, pp. 7, 8.

⁶⁷ Senate Standing Committee, *Education for Active Citizenship*, p. 31.

conceptual clarity.⁶⁸ This created problems for subsequent discourse about ‘active citizenship.’ The conception of democracy in *Education for Active Citizenship* focused upon the relationship between individuals and the political systems and encouraged students to involve themselves in Australia’s decision-making structures. Such structures included all levels of government and Australia’s bureaucratic apparatus from the national context right down to the level of the local community.⁶⁹ For example, the Senate Committee considered voting and inclusion on the electoral role as ‘important’ elements of living in a democracy. There was a desire for students to have ‘more positive attitudes’ towards elections, and for them to view voting as a democratic right rather than a legal duty. The Committee even recommended that the Australian Electoral Commission should develop ‘attractively presented material’ to be sent to voters when they first enrolled to highlight the importance of what they had just done.⁷⁰ The Senate Committee had a genuine desire that students could and should play a role in the political arena. Hence a formal education in the mechanics of political structures was important for citizens and the cause of democracy.⁷¹

Nonetheless, this was a narrow conception of participation that rarely ventured beyond the institutional aspects of parliamentary democracy. The Senate Committee was criticised for neglecting other aspects of Australian democracy, such as

⁶⁸ Edward Wolfers, ‘Educating Australians in the Art of Citizenship’, *The Australian Financial Review*, 30/1/1989; John Fien, ‘Ideology, Political Education and Teacher Education: Matching Paradigms and Models’, *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 23, no. 3 (1991), pp. 239-56.

⁶⁹ Senate Standing Committee, *Education for Active Citizenship*, p. 15.

⁷⁰ Senate Standing Committee, *Education for Active Citizenship*, p. 34.

⁷¹ Ray Anderson, ‘The Role of Citizenship Education in Social Education in Australia’, in Kerry Kennedy et al., eds., *Citizenship Education for a New Age* (Toowoomba: University of Southern Queensland Printery, 1993), pp. 57-61; Edward Wolfers, ‘Educating Australians in the Art of Citizenship’, *The Australian Financial Review*, 30/1/1989.

participation in civil society, or social movements.⁷² There were times that the 1989 Report mentioned the need for ‘social action at the level of everyday living’ but such references were minimal.⁷³ Another feature of the 1989 Senate Report worth noting was that there was no consideration about whether the system of government, or society required altering or scrutiny.⁷⁴ The Senate Committee’s desire for student participation seemed to be based on what American Educationalist George Wood termed ‘citizenship transmission.’ This was where students learned what were deemed the appropriate roles of a citizen, endorsing political tools and citizen activities that fit the current democratic rationality.⁷⁵ This is not to argue that it was the role of a citizen to shun and subvert the political system. Rather, the Senate Committee neglected to consider whether active participation could or should involve thinking critically about society in order to improve it.

In *Active Citizenship Revisited* the Senate Committee responded to the limitations of *Education for Active Citizenship*, clarifying that active participation could and should involve participation beyond formal practices, and that an active citizen should reflect on the world around them in order to transform public action.⁷⁶ The Committee maintained though, that as the public practices of participation were effected through parliamentary democracy, it was important that citizens were ‘inducted into these parliamentary democratic forms and practices through education.’⁷⁷ A textbook that

⁷² Michael Garbutcheon Singh, ‘Teaching Social Education from the Standpoint of Active Citizens’, in Kerry Kennedy et al., eds., *Citizenship Education for a New Age* (Toowoomba: University of Southern Queensland Printery, 1993), pp. 101-122.

⁷³ Senate Standing Committee, *Education for Active Citizenship*, p. 40.

⁷⁴ Rob Gilbert, ‘Education for Active Citizenship and the Problem of Identity’, in Kerry Kennedy et al., eds., *Citizenship Education for a New Age* (Toowoomba: University of Southern Queensland Printery, 1993), p. 91.

⁷⁵ George Wood, ‘Schooling in a Democracy: Transformation or Reproduction’, *Educational Theory* 34, no. 3 (1984), p. 227.

⁷⁶ Senate Standing Committee, *Active Citizenship Revisited*, pp. 6-7.

⁷⁷ Senate Standing Committee, *Active Citizenship Revisited*, p. 7.

did just that was *The Australian Political System: An Introduction*. Written with younger high school students in mind, it affirmed that students needed to be introduced to the processes of so that they might understand the consequences of these processes upon their own lives. Although it contained a variety of stimulus material, it was still a dense textbook full of information. Furthermore, unlike the Senate Committee, this textbook affirmed that it was important that students viewed the political system as a dynamic system, changing and evolving to respond to the needs of Australian society and thereby encouraging students to consider important issues and make improvements.⁷⁸ The Senate Reports are important because they set an agenda, by drawing attention to the low levels of political knowledge and the real need to do something about it.

Schools: The Problem and the Solution

Although the 1989 Senate Report on *Active Citizenship* blamed the education system for the deficiency in civic knowledge, the Committee also considered it an important site from which to rectify the knowledge deficit in order to prepare students to be informed, motivated, active citizens in society. School curriculum documents throughout Australia espoused formal objectives that encouraged citizenship education. However, the 1989 Committee asserted that these objectives were not always a reliable guide to what actually happened in schools. They believed the actual policy was ‘one of neglect’ and a ‘pale reflection of formal curriculum objectives.’⁷⁹ There needed to be action right down to the level of school, teacher and student. The Senate Committee was aware that the solution to this problem was complex, and

⁷⁸ K. R. Evans, *The Australian Political System: An Introduction (Third Edition)* (Gladesville: The Jacaranda Press, 1988).

⁷⁹ Senate Standing Committee, *Education for Active Citizenship*, pp. 21-22, 24-25, 31-32.

required more than just adding a new school subject to the curriculum.⁸⁰ They stressed the need for students to have a ‘relevant factual base of knowledge’ but considered that the ‘most enduring learning’ occurred through participation in activities that enabled students to experience the political process. Educational method had to go ‘beyond traditional classroom technique.’⁸¹ ‘Traditional classroom technique’ was a reference to methods of rote learning facts, and boring classroom experiences associated with previous civics courses.⁸² Consideration of what occurred in the classroom evoked a genuine concern from the Senate Committee to fix the problem. In an era of vocational education and assessable learning outcomes, they could have suggested the introduction of an external test, or specified outcomes that publically demonstrated whether students knew the ‘correct’ things, but they believed that this was likely to cause greater alienation rather than active participation. Successful education for active citizenship required therefore, a meaningful educational experience and effective pedagogical practice.

Education for active citizenship was enshrined in key state and national education policy statements as one of the broad goals for schooling. The New South Wales Curriculum White Paper, *Excellence and Equity*, and the first ever statement from all States and Territories on the ‘Common and Agreed National Goals for Schooling in

⁸⁰ Senate Standing Committee, *Education for Active Citizenship*, pp. 16, 32.

⁸¹ Senate Standing Committee, *Education for Active Citizenship*, p. 43. Others were concerned that the content was taught in an interesting, meaningful way. See: Donald Horne, *Teaching Young Australians to Be Australian Citizens: A 2001 Centennial National Priority* (Clayton: National Centre for Australian Studies, Monash University, 1994), pp. 1-3; Ray Anderson, ‘The Role of Citizenship Education in Social Education in Australia’, in Kerry Kennedy et al., eds., *Citizenship Education for a New Age* (Toowoomba: University of Southern Queensland Printery, 1993), pp. 57-61; Murray Print, ‘Context and Change in Civics Education’, in Murray Print, ed., *Civics and Citizenship Education: Issues from Practice and Research (ASCA Teaching Resource No. 8)* (Belconnen: Australian Curriculum Studies Association, 1995), p. 7.

⁸² Julian Thomas, ‘The History of Civics Education in Australia’, in Civics Expert Group, *Whereas the People: Civics and Citizenship Education* (Australian Government Publishing Service, 1994), pp. 162-171.

Australia,' believed one of the goals of schooling was: 'To develop knowledge, skills, attitudes and values which will enable students to participate as active and informed citizens in our democratic Australian society within an international context.'⁸³

In the 1991 follow-up Report, *Active Citizenship Revisited*, the Chairman, Terry Aulich, acknowledged that while some 'important changes' were underway, 'there is still a long way to go before many of the proposed changes in curricula and policy are fully realised.'⁸⁴ Dr Murry Print, an academic in the Faculty of Education at the University of Sydney concluded that neither Senate Report was able to generate sufficient interest or political will to force substantive change.⁸⁵ That was certainly true of the Senate Committee's notion of active citizenship, however, a close analysis of the 1982 and 1992 NSW History Syllabus will demonstrate that the teaching and learning of history already contributed to educating for active citizenship. This form of active citizenship was a broader conceptualisation, and differed from the constrained definition of active citizenship put forward by the Senate Committee.

Active Citizenship Complicated: The 1982 and 1992 History Syllabus

The 1989 Senate Committee did not consider historical knowledge to be a relevant precursor to citizenship. They considered history to be only partially relevant and 'unlikely to offer opportunities for the range of participatory activities which active

⁸³ New South Wales. Ministry of Education and Youth Affairs, "Excellence and Equity : New South Wales Curriculum Reform : A White Paper on Curriculum Reform in New South Wales." Sydney, 1989, p. 12; 'Common and Agreed National Goals for Schooling in Australia' in Civics Expert Group, *Whereas the People: Civics and Citizenship Education* (Australian Government Publishing Service, 1994), p. 190.

⁸⁴ Senate Standing Committee, *Education for Active Citizenship*, p. vii.

⁸⁵ Murray Print, 'Context and Change in Civics Education', in Murray Print, ed., *Civics and Citizenship Education: Issues from Practice and Research (ASCA Teaching Resource No. 8)* (Belconnen: Australian Curriculum Studies Association, 1995), p. 7.

citizenship education requires.’⁸⁶ This view assumed that democratic participation was primarily about around participation in the political system. The stated purpose of the 1982 History Syllabus did not place an emphasis on the virtue of making better citizens, and did not always use the language of civics and citizenship education. However, a citizenship dimension was present in this document, embedded in the rationale, which promoted a transformative, critical thinking style of participation.

In the social and educational climate that was increasingly focussed on vocationalism, the 1982 History Syllabus was forced to include for the first time a rationale that outlined the important contribution that the study of history made to a student’s education. One of the aims expressed in the rationale was that the knowledge and skills gained through studying history assisted with the development of ‘effective citizens’ by facilitating student entry into the ‘group life of society.’⁸⁷ This was based on the assumption that a basic understanding of Australian and world history was required for Australian citizens to live and work in society.⁸⁸ Such historical knowledge was considered important because it constituted cultural heritage and would foster ‘effective participation in society.’⁸⁹

Additionally, 1982 History Syllabus embodied a flexible rather than a prescriptive notion of citizenship, which was fostered through historical skills. The focus of the syllabus was the development of ‘autonomous citizens,’ which was aided by analytical historical skills that helped students deconstruct and examine contemporary

⁸⁶ Senate Standing Committee, *Education for Active Citizenship*, p. 24.

⁸⁷ Secondary Schools Board, *Syllabus in History Years 7-10* (Sydney: Author, 1980), pp. 1, 4.

⁸⁸ Patrick O’Farrell, ‘A Basic Historical Education: Its Aims and Uses’, *Teaching History* 17, no. 2 (1983), p. 11.

⁸⁹ History Syllabus Committee, ‘History and Core Curriculum: A Response to *Core Curriculum for Australian Schools*’, *Teaching History* 15, no. 3 (1981), pp. 60-62; Secondary Schools Board, *Syllabus in History Years 7-10* (Sydney: Author, 1982), p. 11.

issues in society. The syllabus repeatedly emphasised the importance of students developing their own values, rather than subscribing to a prescribed set of values. The role of the History teacher, then, was to ensure that a ‘range of views are presented’, and to ‘assist students in clarifying and developing their own attitudes.’⁹⁰ Furthermore, understanding the motivation behind the actions of past individuals through a critical assessment of evidence and a degree of empathy was considered to assist students in cultivating a ‘judgement on political policies’ at a national and international level, and ‘central’ to political choice.⁹¹ Students were encouraged to ‘help to correct modern assumptions,’ suggesting that present society was not necessarily the ‘apex of all human achievement.’⁹² Hence the 1982 Syllabus encouraged a discerning attitude towards the Australian democratic system, which was in contrast with the 1989 and 1991 Senate Reports that assumed that the Australian system of government did not require any alteration.⁹³ History textbook writers in the 1980s reflected the value and intentions of historical study outlined in the Syllabus Document. For example *Modern Australia* maintained that through the study of history, students develop ‘valuable skills’ in interpretation and to judge contemporary events using techniques developed in the study of past events.⁹⁴

⁹⁰ Secondary Schools Board, *Syllabus in History Years 7-10* (Sydney: Author, 1982), p. 5.

⁹¹ Secondary Schools Board, *Syllabus in History Years 7-10* (Sydney: Author, 1982), p. 1; Bryan Cowling, Interviewed by Michael Condie (Sydney, 16 August, 2012, (in author’s possession); Jim Fitzgerald, ‘History and the Core Curriculum: A Response to Core Curriculum for Australian Schools’, *Teaching History* 15, no. 2 (1981), p. 73; Russell Cowie, ‘History as a Useful School Subject’, *The Australian History Teacher* 16 (1989), pp. 5-16.

⁹² Secondary Schools Board, *Syllabus in History Years 7-10* (Sydney: Author, 1982), p. 1.

⁹³ Rob Gilbert, Rob, ‘Education for Active Citizenship and the Problem of Identity’, in Kerry Kennedy et al., eds., *Citizenship Education for a New Age* (Toowoomba: University of Southern Queensland Printery, 1993), p. 91.

⁹⁴ Alan Barcan, Tom Blunden, Alan Dwight & Stephen Shortus, *Modern Australia (Second Edition)* (Crows Nest: Macmillan, 1982); Christine Parsons, Leanne Wilson & Pieter Versluis. *Aspects of Australian History* (Marrickville: Science Press, 1987); Mary Andrews & Sheena Coupe, *Was It Only Yesterday?* (Melbourne: Longman Cheshire Pty Ltd, 1983).

Whereas the role of the study of history in inculcating attitudes of active citizenship was implied in the 1982 Syllabus, the 1992 History Syllabus openly stated that the study of Australian history played an important role in educating students for active citizenship.⁹⁵ An aspect of the rationale of the 1992 Syllabus was to develop the skills and attitudes to empower students to ‘participate as active and informed citizens in our democratic society.’⁹⁶ Rather than adopting the simplistic form of active citizenship outlined by the 1989 Senate Committee, the 1992 History Syllabus continued and built upon the 1982 assumption that inherent in the study of history were the skills, knowledge and attitudes necessary to motivate and equip students to be active citizens. These will now be discussed.

The inquiry-based structure of the 1992 Syllabus was considered a vital contribution towards education for active citizenship as the skills of the historian were considered essential for the citizen.⁹⁷ Through the process of historical inquiry, including discussion, debate and consideration of bias, students developed analytical skills. These skills were transferrable and could be applied to the present context including the ability to critically examine different opinions on current affairs or in politics.⁹⁸

The 1992 Syllabus was based upon around the assumption that the study of the past was essential in understanding the present.⁹⁹ This was believed to be critical for

⁹⁵ GO to Musgrave, p. 17 on the difficulty of transformative citizenship. SEE Young Walk through the NEW Syllabus on participation.

⁹⁶ 1992 History Syllabus, p. 1; Carmel Young, "Recent Politics of History Syllabus Development in New South Wales." In *Citizenship Education for a New Age*, edited by O. Watts K. Kennedy, & G. McDonald, 29-46. Toowoomba: University of Southern Queensland Printery, 1993, p. 37.

⁹⁷ For a defence of this position see: Paul Gagon, ‘Why Study History?’, *Atlantic* 176, (November, 1988), pp. 43-66.

⁹⁸ New South Wales Board of Studies, *History Syllabus Years 7-10* (North Sydney: Author, 1992), p. 2. See also: Carmel Young, ‘The Place of History in the School Curriculum’, *Teaching History* 24, no. 4 (1991), pp. 35-36.

⁹⁹ New South Wales Board of Studies, *History Syllabus Years 7-10* (North Sydney: Author, 1992), p. 3.

citizenship education as an understanding of contemporary life enabled students to better participate as citizens. One of the major changes to the 1992 History Syllabus that encapsulated this aim was the introduction of new historiographical areas of research. These included migrants, women and Aboriginal people. The Chair of the 1992 Syllabus Committee, Carmel Young, argued that the inclusion of these 'new histories' offered 'unique pathways' for developing critical understanding and participatory skills.¹⁰⁰ Studying 'new history' contributed to active citizenship in two ways. The first was that the history of these groups were linked to social justice concerns in the present. A critical appraisal of the past, particularly the experiences of these groups would assist students with understanding contemporary issues and considering how they could improve Australia in the present and future.¹⁰¹ The second was that the study of the historiographical debates that 'new history' raised, students could examine the ways that history had been constructed to serve specific purposes. Students could use these skills in society.¹⁰²

Unlike older history courses that integrated civics and citizenship, the focus of the 1992 Syllabus was not the 'great men', key events or the institutions of government, the focus were on the stories of the groups previously neglected a place in the history curriculum. It was not that the Syllabus Committee dismissed the history of political institutions; an understanding of democratic systems was believed to be essential. But these matters were not considered to be the chief goal of studying history.¹⁰³ Nor was

¹⁰⁰ Carmel Young, 'Civics and Citizenship Education and the Teaching of History', *Unicorn* 22, no. 1 (1996), pp. 70-71.

¹⁰¹ Carmel Young, 'The Place of History in the School Curriculum', *Teaching History* 24, no. 4 (1991), pp. 35-36.

¹⁰² Carmel Young, 'Civics and Citizenship Education and the Teaching of History', *Unicorn* 22, no. 1 (1996), pp. 70-71.

¹⁰³ Yvonne Larsson, 'History Open Forum No. 2, History K-10', *Teaching History* 25, no. 3 (1991), pp. 32-36.

the form of participation affirmed in the 1992 Syllabus predicated on political knowledge and understanding. The first draft of the Syllabus actually included a mandatory section on *The Emergence of Parliamentary Democracy*.¹⁰⁴ During the consultation period of the draft, however, that section received a multitude of negative responses, based on concerns of student interest and the learnability of the content. In response to this feedback, the Syllabus Committee removed this ‘much maligned’ section of the Syllabus integrating content into other parts of the syllabus.¹⁰⁵ The final Syllabus Document contained the goal that students should understand historical developments in Australian system of government, myths, events and people that contribute to what it means to be Australian.¹⁰⁶

Contained in both the 1982 and 1992 History Syllabus documents was the belief that the study of Australian history had much to contribute citizenship education. A thorough investigation of past events, individuals and the development of historical skills enlightened present society, and encouraged ‘citizens’ to engage in the historical processes around them.¹⁰⁷ This was also a form of citizenship that did not focus on transmitting a core body of knowledge. It reflected a view that citizenship needed to be developed not learnt.¹⁰⁸ One member of the 1992 Syllabus Committee commented that you should not have to draw too much attention to civics and citizenship; it needs to be done subtly because it is inherent in history. You do not want to ‘bash kids over

¹⁰⁴ New South Wales Board of Studies, *Curriculum Requirements for NSW Schools* (North Sydney: Author, 1991).

¹⁰⁵ Carmel Young, ‘Recent Politics of History Syllabus Development in New South Wales’, in Kerry Kennedy et al., eds., *Citizenship Education for a New Age* (Toowoomba: University of Southern Queensland Printery, 1993), pp. 37-38.

¹⁰⁶ New South Wales Board of Studies, *History Syllabus Years 7-10* (North Sydney: Author, 1992), p. 14.

¹⁰⁷ Heather Goodall, ‘History Round Table Discussion’, *Teaching History* 25, no. 3 (1991), pp. 37-41.

¹⁰⁸ Ann Clark, ‘Civics and Citizenship and the Teaching of Values’, *Unicorn* 22, no. 1 (1996), pp. 54-58.

the head.’¹⁰⁹ New South Wales history teachers believed that the skills and knowledge of history aided informed and active citizens, and was relevant for the present,¹¹⁰ yet this received little support or acknowledgement outside the profession. This would change when in June 1994, Prime Minister Paul Keating made an announcement at a conference in Melbourne.

Active Citizenship and History Reinstated

On 15 June, 1994, in a speech at the ‘New Educational Realities Conference’ in Melbourne, the Prime Minister Paul Keating announced the establishment of a Civics Expert Group to make recommendations on a renewed program for education on government, citizenship and the constitution. From the outset the agenda was a renewed emphasis on Australia’s heritage. Keating proffered that ‘our children should know what the privileges and responsibilities of Australian democracy are, what their great inheritance is. What change is desirable and possible.’¹¹¹ His goal was to enliven an appreciation of Australia’s democracy. Keating’s speech was at a time when the importance of Australian history was in decline in importance in public discourse.¹¹² Keating’s former speech writer, Don Watson, believed that one of the main reasons for

¹⁰⁹ Member of the 1992 History Syllabus Committee, interviewed by Michael Condie (Sydney, 7 August, 2012, (in author’s possession).

¹¹⁰ Christine Halse, et al, *The State of History in New South Wales* (Sydney: History Teachers’ Association of New South Wales, 1997), p. 89.

¹¹¹ Paul Keating, ‘Speech at the New Educational Realities Conference, 15 June, 1994’, <http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;adv=yes;orderBy=customrank;page=0;qquery=New%20Educational%20Realities%20Conference,%20Melbourne;rec=0;resCount=Default>, viewed 8 August, 2012.

¹¹² Stuart Macintyre, ‘The genie and the bottle: Putting history back into the school curriculum’, *Australian Journal of Education* 41, no. 2 (1997), pp. 189-199; Alan Barcan, ‘History in Decay’, *Quadrant* 43, no. 7-8 (1999), pp. 45-55; Alan Barcan, ‘Education - the Thirty Years’ War’, *Quadrant* 43, no. 2 (1999), pp. 80-82; Graema Davison, *The Use and Abuse of Australian History* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 2000); Editorial ‘History versus bunk’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 6/6/1994.

Keating's push to reinstate civics was in order to reinstate Australian history to a place of importance.¹¹³

On 23 June, Keating announced the three 'experts' that would provide the government with its strategic plan for public information and education for the civic issues. The Civics Expert Group was chaired by Professor Stuart Macintyre, the Ernest Scott Professor of History at the University of Melbourne, and a Council Member of the Constitutional Centenary Foundation. He was joined by Dr Ken Boston, the Director General of the New South Wales Department of Education, and Ms Susan Pascoe, the Co-Ordinating Chairperson of the Catholic Education Office in Melbourne. His final words in the media release were that 'as a nation we do not seem to know enough about our system of government and our national achievements.' He hoped that the Government's education program would strengthen democracy by enlivening an appreciation of it.¹¹⁴

Whereas the two Senate Committee Reports did not assume the study of Australian history to be integral in civics and citizenship education, the Civics Expert Group elevated history to being considered an 'essential,' 'core' and 'vital' element of future civics programs.¹¹⁵ The Civics Expert Group was working at a time history as a school subject was no longer highly valued. History had been weakened in the school

¹¹³ Don Watson, *The Politics of History (or the History of Politics). The Fourth Annual Lecture for the History Council of NSW* (Darlinghurst: The History Council of NSW, 2000).

¹¹⁴ Paul Keating, 'Membership of the Civics Experts Group, Press Release', <http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;adv=yes;orderBy=date-eLast;page=1;query=New%20Educational%20Realities%20Conference,%20Melbourne%20Decade%3A%221990s%22;rec=6;resCount=Default>, viewed 8 August, 2012.

¹¹⁵ Civics Expert Group, *Whereas the People: Civics and Citizenship Education* (Australian Government Publishing Service, 1994), p. 52; Stuart Macintyre, 'Civics and Citizenship Education and the Teaching of History', *Unicorn* 22, no. 1 (1996), p. 61; Submission from Bob Carr, NSW Opposition Leader in 'Whereas the People', p. 53; Submission from June M. Healy, National Secretary, Returned Services League Australia in 'Whereas the People', p. 53; Submission from the Association of Heads of Independent Schools of Australia in 'Whereas the People', p. 53.

curriculum, with New South Wales the only state to offer history as a stand-alone subject in the junior years. The Civics Expert Group recognised that the 1992 History Syllabus contained elements of civics, including the development of Australia's parliamentary system, Federation and changing attitudes towards Aboriginal people.¹¹⁶ What was noteworthy was that the Civics Expert Group focussed on historical knowledge, rather than the historical skills that were a crucial feature of active citizenship according to the 1992 Syllabus. This is curious, particularly as the Civics Expert Group considered historical skills such as empathetic understanding and placing events in historical context, would better equip students to analyse contemporary civic issues, just as the 1992 Syllabus did.¹¹⁷

All other states studied history as a strand in the subject 'Study of Society and its Environment.' The Chair of the Civics Expert Group, Professor Stuart Macintyre lamented that this caused history to have an ambiguous status in the public culture. He considered that knowledge of history was 'indispensable' because Australians were not divorced from what happened before them, maintaining that all Australians were products of historical processes that have provided for them political systems, technology, social forms and practices.¹¹⁸ An understanding of how Australia's democratic system evolved, how changing values shaped them and the individuals and groups who helped to forge present-day Australian democracy was considered knowledge that all students should have. Professor Macintyre and the other committee members argued that history was an 'essential foundation for Australian citizenship,'

¹¹⁶ Civics Expert Group, *Whereas the People*, p. 38.

¹¹⁷ Civics Expert Group, *Whereas the People*, p. 52

¹¹⁸ Stuart Macintyre, *The Necessity of History: The Inaugural History Council Lecture* (Sydney: The History Council of NSW, 1996), pp. 11-14.

and should consequently be taught in schools.¹¹⁹ It was not acceptable that there was such ignorance about the achievement's of Australia's past.

What Professor Macintyre and other authors meant by 'Australian achievements' is worthy of further consideration. It was not a one-dimensional assertion of nationalistic pride. Professor Macintyre argued that the history curriculum had 'rightly' abandoned the older triumphal tale of nation-building.¹²⁰ In his 1994 report on citizenship education, *Teaching Young Australians to be Australian Citizens*, Professor Donald Horne proposed that there should be a great sense of Australian achievement in its liberal democratic traditions. He was not advocating chauvinistic patriotism, because although there were things to be proud of in our political heritage, there were also failures, such as the 'Aboriginal question', which remained a challenge for Australians.¹²¹ Professor Horne acknowledged that often students did not see the relevance of the Constitution, or Parliament. That was why he stressed the importance of teaching students about the historical processes responsible for Australia's democracy. He believed that if they saw that they were part of that historical process in creating and making Australia, rather than just learning Syllabus outcomes, they were more likely to be active citizens.¹²²

The Civics Expert Group considered it essential that all young people had a 'thorough knowledge' and 'deep appreciation' of the occupation of Australia by Aboriginal people and the development of the nation since 1788. They desired that students

¹¹⁹ Civics Expert Group, *Whereas the People*, p. 52

¹²⁰ Stuart Macintyre, 'Civics and Citizenship Education and the Teaching of History', *Unicorn* 22, no. 1 (1996), pp. 59-63.

¹²¹ Donald Horne, *Teaching Young Australians to Be Australian Citizens: A 2001 Centennial National Priority* (Clayton: National Centre for Australian Studies, Monash University, 1994), p. 4.

¹²² Donald Horne, *Teaching Young Australians to Be Australian Citizens: A 2001 Centennial National Priority* (Clayton: National Centre for Australian Studies, Monash University, 1994), pp. 4-5.

studied constitutional and political history and Australia's social and cultural history. Furthermore, the Civics Expert Group deliberately broadened the understanding of what was usually meant by 'Australian history' by using the term 'history of Australians.' Recognising that Australian's came from diverse backgrounds, the Civics Expert Group adjudged it important for students to have an understanding of the history and culture of the nations from which many of their parents came.¹²³ In other words, the study of history should be inclusive, embracing the breadth and depth of historical traditions found among the population.

Professor Macintyre was concerned that students encountered a 'bewildering' array of options for studying history that lacked narrative coherence.¹²⁴ The recommendation of the Civics Expert Group proposed that the study of history should have its basis in narrative, so students would 'gain a sense of change over time.'¹²⁵ Reference to 'narrative' history was about the structure and organisation of content rather than advocating for a single portrayal of history. Dr Ken Boston noted that until recently, the story of Australian nationhood was taught as a single perspective. There was now recognition, however, of the plurality of stories and experiences from Australia's past, which should be included in the study of Australian history.¹²⁶ The Civics Expert Group also desired that students would understand that some groups, for instance women and Aboriginal people, were excluded from citizenship, and understand how they pressed their claims for inclusion. They advocated for a nuanced understanding of Australia's past, suggesting that students should compare and reflect on alternative

¹²³ Civics Expert Group, *Whereas the People*, p. 52

¹²⁴ Stuart Macintyre, 'Civics and Citizenship Education and the Teaching of History', *Unicorn* 22, no. 1 (1996), pp. 59-63.

¹²⁵ Civics Expert Group, *Whereas the People*, p. 52

¹²⁶ Ken Boston, 'Australian History and Citizenship Education', *The Australian History Teacher* 21 (1994), pp. 10-11.

civic traditions and different and contested histories.¹²⁷ Furthermore, by understanding the changes that were happening historically, and tracing their trajectories, students could interrogate them and make use of what was done in the past to plan the future.¹²⁸

Therefore, while the history of Australian citizenship did not have the ‘dynamic events’ or ‘revolutionary changes’ that other nations did, Dr Ken Boston believed that there were exciting possibilities of exploring Australia’s rich heritage.¹²⁹ What was important about studying history was the connection with the present day. They needed to show students that they were part of this great history, and that all achievements were Australian achievements. Students could feel a part of that journey, embrace it and contribute to it. Therefore, the form of history advocated by the Civics Expert Group was one that recognised the richness and complexities of Australia’s past. These many and varied stories could inspire further interest, provide students with a greater understanding of the Australian civic contract, and enable them to become informed and active citizens. Crucially, they believed that if students could see themselves as part of the process, they would be motivated to participate.¹³⁰

The reality of a more culturally diverse Australia in the 1990s is an important factor in understanding the push for a renewed focus on citizenship education in schools.¹³¹

Although there was still a concern with fixing the ‘civic deficit’ among Australians,

¹²⁷ Civics Expert Group, *Whereas the People*, p. 52

¹²⁸ Stuart Macintyre, ‘Civics and Citizenship Education and the Teaching of History’, *Unicorn* 22, no. 1 (1996), p. 61.

¹²⁹ Ken Boston, ‘Australian History and Citizenship Education’, *The Australian History Teacher* 21 (1994), pp. 10-11; Ken Boston, ‘Civics and Citizenship: Priorities and Directions’, *Unicorn* 22, no. 1 (1996), p. 85.

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¹³¹ P. Musgrave, ‘How Should We Make Australians?’, *Curriculum Perspectives* 14, no. 3 (1994), p. 11.

the rationale moved from primarily defeating a sense of pessimism and apathy with the political process to the desire to foster a sense of unity among Australian citizens. In fact, the issue was as much about what it meant to be an Australian as it was about how to participate in Australian society.

Multiple submissions to the Civics Expert Group viewed acceptance of diversity, and the associated values of tolerance and inclusivity as a ‘national strength.’ As much as the Civics Expert Group believed that diversity and tolerance were values worth upholding, they did not consider these to be a ‘civic strength.’¹³² They saw a plurality of different value systems in the ‘present era’ as a challenge for citizenship, as it was ‘no longer possible to assume the old values that once bound Australia together as a community.’¹³³ They were seeking something that would unify Australia, and believed that the answer lay in an understanding of contemporary Australian citizenship.¹³⁴ Donald Horne expressed similar sentiments. He upheld the merit of Australia being a ‘tolerant and diverse society’, but believed these could be strengthened by ensuring that students had the opportunity to understand the democratic achievements and unwritten ‘civic contract’ that held Australia together.¹³⁵

This chapter has examined the relationship between the renewed push for citizenship education in schools, the study of Australian history and the ways in which the NSW History Syllabus engaged with the idea of educating for active citizenship, put on the public agenda by the two Senate Reports, *Education for Active Citizenship* and *Active Citizenship Revisited* and the *Whereas the People* report by the Civics Expert Group

¹³² Civics Expert Group, *Whereas the People*, pp. 3, 14.

¹³³ Civics Expert Group, *Whereas the People*, p. 14.

¹³⁴ Civics Expert Group, *Whereas the People*, p. 15.

¹³⁵ Donald Horne, *Teaching Young Australians to Be Australian Citizens: A 2001 Centennial National Priority* (Clayton: National Centre for Australian Studies, Monash University, 1994), p. 1.

in 1994. Although the NSW Syllabus documents did not contain a formalised civics and citizenship component, the knowledge and skills of history, particularly how an understanding of the past contributed to an understanding of the present supported the goal of assisting students to be informed and active participants in society. The following examination of the rationale behind the introduction of mandatory Aboriginal history in the 1992 History Syllabus needs to be considered in the context of continued discussions about the intersection between history, citizenship and education.

Chapter Two: The Aboriginal Perspective as a means of fostering inclusive citizenship

The portrayal of Aboriginal people in Australian history has undergone significant changes due to revisionist scholarship that endeavoured to portray Aboriginal people as historical agents. This shift in perspective necessitated a rethinking of Australia's history. Concurrent with these developments in historiography, Aboriginal people were consolidating full citizenship rights through Native Title and receiving recognition of wrongs perpetrated against them as the consequence of previous government policies. As these changes became subject to increasingly tense debates among politicians, the wider community and in the media, the 1992 NSW History Syllabus included for the first time a mandatory unit on Aboriginal history and thereby also became embroiled in these wider discussions. The core of these disagreements centred around divergent views about the purpose of studying history, and whether it was necessary to teach contentious aspects of the nation's past. It was also a debate about who should have control over what knowledge and content was taught.

This chapter will evaluate the processes that led to the inclusion of an Aboriginal perspective in the history syllabus. On one level, it was the desire to incorporate historical perspectives previously neglected in order to broaden the curriculum. There was, however, another impetus to include the Aboriginal viewpoint within the Syllabus. There was a growing belief that an understanding of Aboriginal history was essential knowledge for Aboriginal students in order to empower them to become engaged citizens. This knowledge of the past was also considered essential knowledge

for all Australians, because of the belief that knowledge of Aboriginal history would contribute to the Reconciliation process.

Widening the Vision: Embracing new historiography

One of the reasons for the emergence of Aboriginal History in the school curriculum throughout the 1980s was a desire to ‘tell the stories’ that had previously been neglected by historians. In a pioneering article published in *Teaching History* in 1980, the academic historian Frank Farrell explained that the inclusion of Aboriginal history in the national historical narrative had established the foundations of a ‘new Australian history’ that went beyond ‘Eurocentrism’, with the potential to widen the vision of Australians.¹³⁶ Farrell believed that teachers had a responsibility to be aware of these and future historiographical developments and incorporate them in the teaching of Australian history in schools.¹³⁷ The theme of ‘widening the vision’ of Australian history was commonplace among state and national history teacher associations throughout the 1980s. The editorial for the 1986 edition of the *Australian History Teacher* described how ‘in recent years, there has been an acknowledgement of the limited nature of history as it has been traditionally defined and presented...[and the need to acknowledge and value] the lifestyles and contributions of groups previously excluded from the mainstream of history.’¹³⁸ Similarly, the HTA executive believed the inclusion of perspectives from previously neglected groups such as Aboriginal people had broadened the discipline,¹³⁹ and Yvonne Larsson, from

¹³⁶ Frank Farrell, ‘Aboriginal History’, *Teaching History* 14 no. 3 (1980), p. 23.

¹³⁷ Frank Farrell, ‘Aboriginal History’, *Teaching History* 14 no. 3 (1980), pp. 4-24. See also: Malcolm Prentis, ‘Now It Is Our Turn: Current Concerns in 19th Century Aboriginal History’, *Teaching History* 18, no. 3 (1984), pp. 8-19.

¹³⁸ The History Teachers' Association of Australia, ‘Editorial’, *The Australian History Teacher* 13 (1986), p. 1.

¹³⁹ HTA Executive, ‘Response to the Discussion Paper on Curriculum in N.S.W. Schools’, *Teaching History* 23, no. 1 (1989), pp. 20-23.

the 1992 Syllabus Committee, argued that it was important to tell the stories of those previously left out of historical narrative.¹⁴⁰ The predominant view was that the Syllabus should not remain static, and backwards looking, but utilise new developments in historiography, especially those that emphasised the inclusion of previously ignored social groups.

A positive vision for the inclusion of Aboriginal perspectives

There was another agenda behind the inclusion of Aboriginal history in the 1992 Syllabus - social justice and empowerment. Members of the Syllabus Committee unashamedly drew upon the 1982 NSW Department of Education *Aboriginal Education Policy*, the first of its kind in Australia.¹⁴¹ The *Aboriginal Education Policy* was developed to address educational disadvantage among Aboriginal people. This policy is a crucial document to understand because of its direct influence on the 1992 NSW History Syllabus.

A good education is foundational in preparing students for life in Australian society, however, for many Aboriginal students and parents, the education system was seen as a failure. Not only was there widespread educational disadvantage among Aboriginal students, but also a belief that ‘biased’ and ‘inadequate’ teaching resources on Aboriginal culture and history were contributing factors to student alienation from school as a path to future success.¹⁴² The accusation was not just that the history

¹⁴⁰ Yvonne Larsson, ‘History Open Forum No. 2, History K-10’, *Teaching History* 25, no. 3 (1991), pp. 32-36.

¹⁴¹ Linda Burney, Interviewed by Michael Condie (Sydney, 17 August, 2012, (in author’s possession), Kate Keeley, Interviewed by Michael Condie (Sydney, 3 August, 2012, (in author’s possession), Carmel Young, ‘Aboriginal Life Stories’, *Teaching History* 31 no. 3 (1997), p. 12.

¹⁴² Carmel Young, ‘Aboriginal Education and the Teaching of History’, *Teaching History* 21 no. 4 (1987), p. 9; New South Wales Department of Education, *Aboriginal Education Policy* (Sydney: Author, 1982), p. 3.

syllabus lacked an Aboriginal perspective, but that it was prejudiced against them, which made it a flawed teaching tool. The aim of the *Aboriginal Education Policy* was to develop a prototype for a meaningful and appropriate educational experience for Aboriginal students.¹⁴³ The goal of the policy was broader than simply assisting Aboriginal students to rediscover their Aboriginal identity. The educational outcomes for Aboriginal students, it was hoped, would be the gaining of ‘knowledge and skills needed for effective participation in society.’¹⁴⁴ Ensuring that there was an Aboriginal perspective within the school curriculum was viewed as vital to achieving this goal.¹⁴⁵ At one level, the *Policy* had vocational undertones, with the underlying aim to provide skills to enable future employment. But more significantly, it aimed to have Aboriginal people ‘gain a knowledge of how Australian society and other societies function’ to enable their greater participation in Australian society.¹⁴⁶ It was a positive step that aimed to increase educational equity for Aboriginal students.

Although the inclusion of an Aboriginal perspective was believed to be critical for the engagement of Aboriginal students, it was also considered important knowledge for all Australians. Key government and department figures outlined this significant goal in the introduction to the policy. The NSW Director General of Education, D. Swan, believed all students should have a knowledge, understanding and appreciation of Aboriginal culture and heritage.¹⁴⁷ The NSW Minister for Education R. J. Mulock agreed, going a step further by describing this educational goal as ‘urgent.’¹⁴⁸ Additionally, the President of the NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group, R.

¹⁴³ *Aboriginal Education Policy*, p. 2.

¹⁴⁴ *Aboriginal Education Policy*, p. 2.

¹⁴⁵ *Aboriginal Education Policy*, p. 2.

¹⁴⁶ *Aboriginal Education Policy*, p. 2.

¹⁴⁷ *Aboriginal Education Policy*, p. 1.

¹⁴⁸ *Aboriginal Education Policy*, p. 1.

Morgan, hoped that through education, future generations of non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal people would achieve Reconciliation.¹⁴⁹ The overwhelming hope was that a knowledge of an Aboriginal perspective would help foster positive relationships between the two groups and have positive repercussions for future generations.

A knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal history was an important aspect of furthering this aim. One method of enhancing a sense of personal worth among Aboriginal students would be the inclusion of Aboriginal culture and achievements as part of the curriculum. The *Aboriginal Education Policy* stipulated that when teaching the history of Australia, ‘the identification and examination of Aboriginal participation and contributions would be a significant development in enhancing an Aboriginal relevance to the school curriculum.’¹⁵⁰ This included the history of Aboriginal people and culture prior to and following European occupation and the history of ‘contact’ since 1788. The emphasis was on the agency of Aboriginal people and their contribution, rather than on what Europeans did to them. The aim was to promote positive attitudes towards Aboriginal society.¹⁵¹ But it was also an act of ‘replenishment,’ to re-equip Aboriginal students who had suffered decades of dispossession in their own country as full citizens of Australian society.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁹ *Aboriginal Education Policy*, p. 1.

¹⁵⁰ *Aboriginal Education Policy*, p. 4.

¹⁵¹ *Aboriginal Education Policy*, p. 7.

¹⁵² Nash, T., ‘The Aboriginal Perspective in the Study of History’, *History Teachers Association of NSW Newsletter* no. 2, 1984, pp. 50-52. See also: George Wood, ‘Schooling in a Democracy: Transformation or Reproduction’, *Educational Theory* 34, no. 3 (1984), pp. 235-236; Michael Garbutcheon Singh, ‘The Struggle against Curriculum Imperialism: Questioning Invisibility and Stereotypes in Australian History’, in Ray Land, ed., *Invasion and After: A Case Study in Curriculum Politics* (Brisbane: Queensland Studies Centre, 1994), p. 36.

Furthermore, Aboriginal history was considered important as a means to foster an understanding of contemporary Aboriginal society, especially the history of European and Aboriginal relations. The desire was to inform White Australia about the past treatment of Aboriginal people. A publication by the Aboriginal Education Unit in 1982 was created to inform teachers about the effects of culture contact on Aboriginal Australia. It detailed how the effects of ‘settlement’ were devastating on Aboriginal ways of life, creating a syndrome of dispossession and feelings of powerlessness, which had reverberations to the present day.¹⁵³ There was no promise that a study of this history would be unchallenging. Students would be ‘confronted’ with the history of the Aboriginal past.¹⁵⁴ The potentially confronting nature of studying Aboriginal history was not considered a hindrance though, due to the urgent educational and social need to develop an empathetic understanding of contemporary Aboriginal concerns. According to these policy documents, studying the Aboriginal perspective therefore had two purposes. It was to assist with reclaiming Aboriginality, and was to help contemporary society to understand Aboriginal issues.

The *Aboriginal Education Policy* was released just after the 1982 History Syllabus was implemented in schools. This meant that the Committee responsible for creating the new Syllabus had no opportunity to implement the recommendations of the *Aboriginal Education Policy*. The new syllabus did however contain a unit on Aboriginal history. Within a unit called ‘Australia to 1914, ‘Topic 7’ was devoted to ‘The Aboriginal People’ and included the study of their prehistory, culture, and the impact of White ‘Settlement.’ Students could also study Indigenous developments in

¹⁵³ Cook, Trevor & Jennifer van Proctor, *The Effects of Culture Contact on Aboriginal Australia* (Sydney: N.S.W. Department of Education Directorate of Special Programs, 1982), pp. 4-5; 12; 14.

¹⁵⁴ Nash, T., ‘The Aboriginal Perspective in the Study of History’, *History Teachers Association of NSW Newsletter* no. 2, 1984, pp. 50-52.

the arts.¹⁵⁵ Importantly, the final dot-point in 'Topic 7' was the study of recent developments.¹⁵⁶ Hence, enshrined in the 1982 Syllabus was a subtle acknowledgement that the history of Aboriginal people continued up until the present rather than end at some point in the 19th century. Furthermore, the implication of past injustice as a cause of present-day problems was also reflected in history textbooks. For instance *Was it Only Yesterday?* included a section on Aboriginal history that culminated in a discussion of four 'present day' problems Aboriginal people face.¹⁵⁷ On one level, the content in the Syllabus already reflected some of the aims of the *Aboriginal Education Policy*. However, as the study of Australian History was not mandatory, there was no guarantee that students, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal would be exposed to the content. Thus the goal of educating all students remained unfulfilled at this point.

History teachers upheld that the subject of history as an ideal place for the inclusion of an Aboriginal perspective. Writing in 1984, soon after the policy was released, T. Nash of the HTA argued that history teachers should 'repair' the previous deficiencies and ensure that all History courses contained an Aboriginal perspective, and should push the claims of history as the 'best discipline to give this perspective.' Then in 1987, Carmel Young argued that the recommendations of the *Aboriginal Education Policy* had 'obvious implications for history teachers, particularly in 'affecting

¹⁵⁵ Secondary Schools Board, *Syllabus in History Years 7-10* (Sydney: Author, 1982), p. 17.

¹⁵⁶ Secondary Schools Board, *Syllabus in History Years 7-10* (Sydney: Author, 1982), p. 17.

¹⁵⁷ Sheena Coupe & Mary Andrews, *Was It Only Yesterday?* (Melbourne: Longman Cheshire Pty Ltd, 1983), pp. 186-188; Sheena Coupe & Mary Andrews, *Was It Only Yesterday? (2nd Edition)* (Melbourne: Longman Cheshire Pty Ltd, 1989), pp. 195-198. The four problems identified were housing, health, education and work.

positive change.’¹⁵⁸ Their advocacy of history having a special role in furthering this agenda is interesting in the context of the increased need to justify the place of history in the school curriculum. However, their argument was born out of more than a defence of the utility of history as a subject. Nash and Young both implied a degree of moral duty to mend the historical debt left by a curriculum that had alienated Aboriginal students and contributed to present-day problems. The inclusion of Aboriginal history was also focussed on setting an agenda for future generations. As the Director of Aboriginal Training and Cultural Institute, Margaret Valadian contended, the challenge for history teachers was to determine what could be learned from the historical record of the past and present, for the development of a ‘better prognosis for the future.’¹⁵⁹

Public Debate in the Bicentenary

The inclusion of an Aboriginal perspective in the Syllabus was propelled into the national spotlight during the 1988 Bicentenary of the British Colonisation of Australia when the Australian and NSW Teachers’ Federation passed a motion that instructed teachers to boycott any support material or programs outside the curricula that did not include an Aboriginal perspective. The NSW Teachers’ Federation had a lengthy association with Aboriginal issues, working closely with the NSW Aboriginal Consultative Group and the Department of Education in the development of the *Aboriginal Education Policy* earlier in the decade.¹⁶⁰ The aim of the boycott was to

¹⁵⁸ T. Nash, ‘The Aboriginal Perspective in the Study of History’ History Teachers’ Association of NSW Newsletter, no. 2, 1984, p. 50; Carmel Young, ‘Aboriginal Education and the Teaching of History’, *Teaching History* 21, no. 4 (1987), p. 9, 10.

¹⁵⁹ Margaret Valadian, ‘Aboriginal History’, *The Australian History Teacher* 14 (1987), p. 6. See also Michael Cigler, ‘Community History for Young Australians’, *The Australian History Teacher* 14 (1987), pp. 11.

¹⁶⁰ NSW Teachers Federation, *Aboriginal Education Policy* (Surry Hills: NSW Teachers Federation, 1999), p. 5.

encourage teachers to take a proactive role in presenting the Aboriginal side of history, particularly during the bicentenary of Captain Phillip's arrival in Australia to found a British colony.¹⁶¹ Professor Ken Inglis, a historian from the ANU also believed that the inclusion of Aboriginal history was an important part of the curriculum. In a letter to *The Australian* Inglis expressed concern that the Teachers Federation 'proposed boycott' was an unnecessary method of furthering that aim. He suggested that teachers could have 'easily' taken more positive action by including already existing material, detailing the plethora of new scholarship readily available for teachers to use in classroom to convey an Aboriginal perspective.¹⁶² Also, the NSW Teachers Federation threat to boycott teaching material was connected with political issues outside the classroom, with teachers urged to contribute financially to Aboriginal protests, and to lobby the Federal government to introduce uniform Land Rights.¹⁶³ This linkage to protests confused the issue about whether teaching an Aboriginal perspective would become synonymous with an ideological position, even though teachers were urged not to force particular values on their students.¹⁶⁴ The threat to boycott resources placed schools as sites of engagement with wider social issues. The Australian Teachers Federation Aboriginal Educational Co-ordinator, Ms Pat Fowell, wanted the Aboriginal history of the nation placed on the educational agenda as a way of achieving social justice outcomes. She urged teachers to 'take the moral high ground' and 'use 1988 to correct history and create some long lasting effects.'¹⁶⁵

¹⁶¹ 8/1/1988 David Kennedy '1988 Ban A Matter of History, Say Teachers' Sydney Morning Herald; Tony Robertson, 'Teachers to boycott Bicentenary' *The Australian* 7/1/1988

¹⁶² Professor Ken Inglis, 'Letters to the Editor: Aborigines in the picture' *The Australian* 16-17/1/1988

¹⁶³ Tony Robertson, 'Teachers to boycott Bicentenary' *The Australian*, 7/1/1988.

¹⁶⁴ Carmel Young, "Aboriginal Education and the Teaching of History." *Teaching History* 21, no. 4 (1987), pp. 13-14.

¹⁶⁵ cited in Tony Robertson, 'Teachers to boycott Bicentenary' *The Australian*, 7/1/1988.

In an address to the Australian Teachers Federation Conference in 1988, the Labor Federal Education Minister, Mr John Dawkins, urged teachers to 'grasp their obligation' to 'correct the distorted view of history.'¹⁶⁶ He saw the school curriculum, and teachers as integral to rectifying this deficit. Another Federal Government Minister, while acting as Education minister, Mr Holding, then called a meeting of all state Education Ministers to re-write their State curriculum documents to include an Aboriginal perspective. Like the Education Minister, he argued that the teaching of Australian history had for generations been 'distorted,' with particular consequences for the present day. In an interview on the 7:30 Report, Holding contended that 'one of the reasons for racial tension in Australia is because the average Australian has very little knowledge of the history of his country and in particular the history of our indigenous people and their treatment.'¹⁶⁷ What was crucial was Dawkin's emphasis on contact history. An acknowledgement of the more negative aspects of Australia's past would assist with overcoming present day racial tensions. The link between the past and the present was clear.

Prior to the very public debate about the role of Aboriginal history, conservative educationalists had already expressed concern that the History Syllabus was not the most appropriate avenue to explore contemporary issues. Academic historian Patrick O'Farrell objected to 'the Aboriginal' being treated with fervour over past injustices that were used as 'a source of ammunition for present warfares.'¹⁶⁸ He considered that this type of treatment had little to do with historical understanding. Although he did

¹⁶⁶ Peter Terry and Tony Robertson 'Aboriginal row: Dawkins wants history rewritten', *The Weekend Australian*, 9-10/1/1988.

¹⁶⁷ Steve Burrell, Tony Hewett and David Mcknight 'Govt Bid to Head Off Black Protests' *Sydney Morning Herald*, 8/1/1988

¹⁶⁸ Patrick O'Farrell, 'A Basic Historical Education: Its Aims and Uses', *Teaching History* 17, no. 2 (1983), p. 10.

not mention Aboriginal people specifically, Educationalist Geoffrey Partington argued that the History Syllabus should not function to serve the specific needs of individuals, particularly if those needs had ramifications for the present day.¹⁶⁹ O'Farrell and Partington did not consider Aboriginal history unworthy of study, rather they were concerned that explicit connections to the present day created the potential for ideological bias. The difficulty with asserting that Aboriginal History was important in assisting students understand the present situation was that it walked a very fine line between fostering empathetic understanding, and being viewed as propagating a particular political position.

The Federal Government's proposal to alter the curriculum to place a greater emphasis on Aboriginal people concerned many academics and commentators who feared that it was a deliberate attempt to make students to feel guilty. Professor of History John Maloney warned against 'turning education into propaganda,' while Professor Les Merchant described it as 'a fascist act of intellectual terrorism.'¹⁷⁰ He argued that 'governments become dangerous when they decide what history they want taught.'¹⁷¹ The strength of their language was intended to match their concern about politicising the curriculum. Professor Merchant did not necessarily oppose the teaching of Aboriginal history, but called for further research by academics with 'real minds' not 'bleeding hearts.'¹⁷² Although it was a fair point to consider aspects of Aboriginal history as political, and connected to present political causes, Merchant

¹⁶⁹ Geoffrey Partington, 'The Classification of History Syllabuses', *Teaching History* 17, no. 2 (1983), p. 48. See also: Geoffrey Partington, 'How Can Curricula Be Analyzed? The Case for History Syllabuses', *The History Teacher* 18, no. 2 (1985), pp. 189-188.

¹⁷⁰ Staff reporters, 'Curricula revamp on Aborigines 'a fascist act' *The Australian*, 9-10/1/1988. See also Editorial, 'History not Propaganda' *The Australian*, 12/1/1988

¹⁷¹ Peter Terry and Tony Robertson 'Aboriginal row: Dawkins wants history rewritten', *The Weekend Australian* 9-10/1/1988

¹⁷² Peter Terry and Tony Robertson 'Aboriginal row: Dawkins wants history rewritten', *The Weekend Australian* 9-10/1/1988

unfairly dismissed the authors of Aboriginal history as unhistorical. Also, what Professor Merchant and other commentators failed to consider was that the then current history curriculum could be seen as politicised for not addressing Australia's Aboriginal past. History, particularly national history is inherently political. It is a question of what side of politics you may end up on.

These debates brought to public attention the issue of who should control Syllabus content. The NSW Minister for Education, Mr Cavalier, believed that the Federal Government had no control over State Syllabus development, taking issue with Education Ministers being asked to change the Syllabus. He argued that a wide group of teachers, parents, and academics should be responsible for changes in the Syllabus, not Government ministers.¹⁷³ He also correctly maintained NSW already had mandated the inclusion of Aboriginal Perspectives in the syllabus, hence a move from Canberra was not necessary. What Mr Cavalier overlooked was that although the *Aboriginal Education Policy* had set such an agenda, not all curriculum documents had implemented its recommendations. This meant that the inclusion of this material relied on schools or individual teachers proactively integrating them. This was the situation with the 1982 History Syllabus, with Carmel Young suggesting that the extent to which Aboriginal perspectives were incorporated depended on teacher preference.¹⁷⁴ A change in the Syllabus to mandate the study of Aboriginal history would, however, ensure that all students were exposed to the content.

¹⁷³ Staff reporters, 'Curricula revamp on Aborigines 'a fascist act' *The Australian*, 9-10/1/1988

¹⁷⁴ Young, 'Aboriginal Education and the Teaching of History', p. 9.

Creating A Cultural Tool

In February 1991, the NSW History Syllabus Committee was given the task of devising the years 7-10 History Syllabus, with teaching support materials, to be ready for release into schools by October. This required the release of a draft by June, which meant there were few opportunities for consultation with teachers or other interested bodies in such a restricted timeframe.¹⁷⁵ The Committee was chaired by Dr Carmel Young, who was a lecturer at the School of Curriculum and Teaching Studies at the University of Sydney and the President of the History Teachers Association. It included representatives from the Board of Studies, including the HSIE Officer Kate Keeley, who was a former history teacher. Professional historians including Professor Richard Waterhouse from the University of Sydney were also on the Committee, as were representatives from different education departments. One of the key individuals on the History Syllabus Committee was Linda Burney. She was the President of the Aboriginal Education Consultative Group, which was the formal lobby group for Aboriginal Education. She was also an advisor to the Board of Studies. Ms Burney had a long history of involvement in Aboriginal education. She was one of the first Aboriginal employees of the head office of the Department of Education and an employee in the Aboriginal Education Unit not long after it was first established, and assisted in the development of the 1982 Aboriginal Education policy.

Creation of the 1992 syllabus was not a simple process. Development was marked by internal fractures and external pressures. The Committee was called before the Board

¹⁷⁵ Carmel Young, 'Recent Politics of History Syllabus Development in New South Wales', in Kerry Kennedy et al., eds., *Citizenship Education for a New Age* (Toowoomba: University of Southern Queensland Printery, 1993), p. 34.

of Studies several times to explain the direction that the Syllabus was taking.¹⁷⁶ The two broad areas of contention within the Committee were what content to include and the structure and organisation of the content. There was particular debate about whether the Syllabus should have a narrative-based structure, or an inquiry-based approach. The teachers on the Committee believed that the inquiry-based approach was best as it gave teachers a choice how to teach the content, and was reflective of overall educational practices.¹⁷⁷

As the Syllabus went through different drafts, Aboriginal History consistently remained one of the core topics. There was no suggestion that it would be removed. It was part of the agenda of placing previously neglected areas of historical research into the Syllabus. This included topics on heritage, women's history and multicultural perspectives. Additionally, it emerged out of a strong social justice agenda that directly related to current events. Linda Burney believed that there was a growing realisation that social justice outcomes for Aboriginal people were unacceptable, and a key to change were moves towards educational equity. This meant ensuring education was relevant for Aboriginal people. 'If you go through a school system that does not recognise your history, or enhance your identity and self-esteem then you're not going to participate.'¹⁷⁸ Her immediate concern was Aboriginal participation in the education system, with the goal of lifelong participation in society. Though she did not consider Aboriginal history to be just for Aboriginal people. She believed it was a

¹⁷⁶ Member of the 1992 History Syllabus Committee, Interviewed by Michael Condie (Sydney, 7 August, 2012, (in author's possession); Kate Keeley, Interviewed by Michael Condie (Sydney, 3 August, 2012, (in author's possession).

¹⁷⁷ Member of the 1992 History Syllabus Committee, Interviewed by Michael Condie (Sydney, 7 August, 2012, (in author's possession); Kate Keeley, Interviewed by Michael Condie (Sydney, 3 August, 2012, (in author's possession); Carmel Young, "Recent Politics of History Syllabus Development in New South Wales." In *Citizenship Education for a New Age*, edited by O. Watts K. Kennedy, & G. McDonald, 29-46. Toowoomba: University of Southern Queensland Printery, 1993, p. 36.

¹⁷⁸ Linda Burney, Interviewed by Michael Condie (Sydney, 17 August, 2012, (in author's possession).

wonderful opportunity for all students to come out of the education system knowing the breadth and depth of the Aboriginal perspective.¹⁷⁹ Crucially, Ms Burney considered Aboriginal History to be fundamental for citizenship because it was a ‘wonderful heritage...for all of us.’¹⁸⁰

The Committee was developing the Syllabus when in 1991, the *Report into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody* was released. Although the education system was not the focus of the Royal Commission, the Report stated that the education system had perpetuated racist attitudes towards Aboriginal people because it ‘virtually ignored’ Aboriginal history and culture and ‘misrepresented the history of Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal relations.’¹⁸¹ The Royal Commission argued that ‘the curricula of schools at all levels should reflect the fact that Australia has an Aboriginal history and Aboriginal viewpoints on social, cultural and historical matters.’¹⁸² According to Kate Keeley, this was an extremely important influence on Syllabus development, and further convinced Committee members of the importance of introducing mandatory Aboriginal history for all high school students in New South Wales.¹⁸³ The Committee took great care to create a Syllabus that was practicable. However when it presented its draft to the Board of Studies for approval, it was spectacularly rejected.

¹⁷⁹ Linda Burney, Interviewed by Michael Condie (Sydney, 17 August, 2012, (in author’s possession).

¹⁸⁰ Linda Burney, Interviewed by Michael Condie (Sydney, 17 August, 2012, (in author’s possession).

¹⁸¹ Elliott Johnston, *Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1991), volume 4 28.1.

¹⁸² Elliott Johnston, *Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1991), volume 3, 290.

¹⁸³ Kate Keeley, Interviewed by Michael Condie (Sydney, 3 August, 2012, (in author’s possession). See also Richard Buckhorn, ‘Breaking the Silence’, *Teaching History* 36, no. 3 (2002), pp. 4-10.

Rejection!

No official explanation was provided for the decision to repudiate the draft syllabus.¹⁸⁴ The Sydney Morning Herald reported that according to Board of Studies sources, the ‘concern with the history syllabus was that it was more “sociological than historical.”’ The other concern was also disquiet that the draft syllabus ‘honed in on issues such as racism or multiculturalism in a contemporary rather than a full historical context.’¹⁸⁵ Dr Lesley Lynch, a spokeswoman for the Ministry of Education reported that ‘An understanding of our history is so important that we've got to get it right and feel certain we're right.’¹⁸⁶ The Board reported that it would seek advice from historians such as Brian Fletcher, Bicentennial Professor of Australian History at the University of Sydney about the ‘big issues’ that students should know about Australia.¹⁸⁷ The chairman of the Geography Committee, Phil O’Neil, whose Syllabus was also rejected believed that the Geography Syllabus was rejected, possibly to save the history committee from embarrassment, believed that the real reason that the Draft Syllabus was shunned was due to the ‘political and ideological debate about the content of the History Syllabus.’¹⁸⁸

These accusations of ideological bias would continue to plague the Syllabus. Carmel Young condemned the Board, suggesting that they should take ‘a closer and more sympathetic’ look at the draft syllabus. She did not deny that ‘big issues’ such as racism, immigration and multiculturalism were canvassed in the Syllabus, but rather

¹⁸⁴ Lyndon Sharp, *History Teachers' Association of NSW News Sheet* 4 (November, 1991), p. 2.

¹⁸⁵ Anne Susskind ‘Board Rejects Syllabuses’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10/9/1991. See also: Alan Barcan, ‘History in Decay’, *Quadrant* 43, no. 7-8 (1999), p. 53. Barcan stated that the draft was rejected because it was too focused on the present day and too political.

¹⁸⁶ cited in Anne Susskind ‘Board Rejects Syllabuses’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10/9/1991

¹⁸⁷ Anne Susskind ‘Board Rejects Syllabuses’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10/9/1991

¹⁸⁸ cited in Anne Susskind ‘Board Rejects Syllabuses’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10/9/1991

than considering them detractors, she claimed these features were its value.¹⁸⁹ Although she did not use the term 'active' or 'citizenship', Young's defence of the Syllabus was nonetheless based on the philosophy that history assisted students to engage with the world around them. Young asserted that the Syllabus provided historical background to many important issues raised in the media. She also reaffirmed that the Syllabus embraced 'current historical writing by professional historians' and that the Syllabus was in fact, a reflection of current historiography. The Syllabus in her opinion was at 'the cutting edge.'¹⁹⁰ The difficulty of this justification was that 'cutting edge' was construed by critics who desired a conservative, traditional history syllabus as the Syllabus' detrimental feature.

Further public censure awaited the Syllabus Committee when *The Australian* published an article by Padraic P. McGuinness condemning the new Syllabus. Under the provocative headline, 'Big Brother Writes the Syllabus' he argued that the changes in the NSW History Syllabus came out of an 'Anti-Vietnam war movement' left-wing agenda. He was particularly concerned that the perspective of Aboriginal history read like a 'jumbled index from a bad propaganda tract' implying that everything about 'white settlement' was 'bad and disgraceful,' which would 'indoctrinate' future students.¹⁹¹ Linda Burney responded to the accusations of indoctrination, contending that Australians had been indoctrinated for generations by the denial of Aboriginal history in school, and it was time that the 'real story' was told. Additionally, she re-asserted that Australia should be more concerned with promoting

¹⁸⁹ cited in Anne Susskind 'Changing the Course of History', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 17/9/1991.

¹⁹⁰ cited in Anne Susskind 'Changing the Course of History', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 17/9/1991.

¹⁹¹ P. P. McGuinness, 'Big Brother Writes the Syllabus', *The Australian*, 17-18/1/1991.

national reconciliation and developing a more tolerant society.¹⁹² McGuinness's denunciation of the Syllabus was based on a misreading of an older draft, and ignored the affirmative inclusive intent of the Syllabus designers. Regardless McGuinness's accusations of ideological bias in the Syllabus became difficult to dislodge.¹⁹³

The difficulty with integrating new historiography at the 'forefront of research'¹⁹⁴ and new educational practice was that these assumptions about history and historical knowledge differed from the general public. The Syllabus Committee therefore organised a series of roundtables in October 1991 thus belatedly acting on advice to broaden debate by history professionals including teachers to discuss the perceived problems with the Syllabus. There were four roundtables/forums where papers were presented and discussed. Contributors included the History Teachers Association Executive; Yvonne Larsson, from the University of Sydney and a member of the Syllabus Committee; Heather Goodall, a historian with a background in Aboriginal history from the University of Technology and historian Paula Hamilton, also from the UTS. Crucially, all the presenters affirmed the Syllabus Committee's understanding of historical knowledge: that it is problematic, disputed and 'essentially political.' History involved questioning knowledge, and investigating contested perspectives on the past.¹⁹⁵ The roundtables affirmed the importance of teaching the stories missing from previous interpretations, validating the presence of multiple

¹⁹² Linda Burney, 'It is about time the real story was told...', *History Teachers' Association of NSW News Sheet* 4 (November 1991).

¹⁹³ Carmel Young, 'Recent Politics of History Syllabus Development in New South Wales', in Kerry Kennedy et al., eds., *Citizenship Education for a New Age* (Toowoomba: University of Southern Queensland Printery, 1993), p. 43.

¹⁹⁴ Member of the 1992 History Syllabus Committee, Interviewed by Michael Condie (Sydney, 7 August, 2012, (in author's possession).

¹⁹⁵ HTA Executive, 'Teaching History in the 1990s - History Open Forum No. 3', *Teaching History* 25 no. 3 (1991), pp. 30-31; Heather Goodall, 'History Round Table Discussion', *Teaching History* 25 no. 3 (1991), pp. 37-41; Paula Hamilton, 'History Round Table Discussion', *Teaching History* 25 no. 3 (1991), pp. 42-44; Yvonne Larsson, 'History Open Forum No. 2, History K-10', *Teaching History* 25 no. 3 (1991), pp. 32-36.

perspectives, affirming that ‘Aboriginal history and Aboriginal perspectives should be included in the key areas of enquiry.’¹⁹⁶ Carmel Young concluded that the Roundtables ‘lay to rest’ accusations of bias and granted general endorsement of the structure and intent of the Syllabus.¹⁹⁷ Notably absent at the Roundtables were known conservative educationalists or historians and therefore endorsement was not surprising. Nonetheless, after difficulties, anxiety and infuriation, the Syllabus was finally implemented in 1992 retaining its progressive, social justice agenda that aimed to provide students with a framework of thinking about the world.

Aboriginal history was not only afforded greater prominence in the new Syllabus, but was one of the five mandatory inquiry questions. Every student in NSW would examine the question: ‘In what ways have Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people responded to contact with each other?’¹⁹⁸ Members of the Aboriginal community welcomed its inclusion, particularly the impact it could have in healing racial tensions. Aboriginal Education Officers at the Board of Studies suggested that it would have a role in overcoming racist tendencies through altering factual errors in previous history books.¹⁹⁹ Aboriginal author Ruby Langford argued that ‘we cannot go forward and advance ourselves until White Australia knows our past history. Only then can we go forward in understanding.’²⁰⁰ Pointing to public controversies about Aboriginal issues, Shadow NSW Education Minister, John Aquilina, also insisted that the study of history had the responsibility to develop a more mature society, and prevent the

¹⁹⁶ Lyndon Sharp ed., *HTA News Sheet*, 5 (1991), p. 1.

¹⁹⁷ Carmel Young, ‘Recent Politics of History Syllabus Development in New South Wales’, in Kerry Kennedy et al., eds., *Citizenship Education for a New Age* (Toowoomba: University of Southern Queensland Printery, 1993), p. 43.

¹⁹⁸ New South Wales Board of Studies, *History Syllabus Years 7-10* (North Sydney: Author, 1992), pp. 24-25.

¹⁹⁹ Kevin Butler & Adrian Tucker, ‘Aboriginal Views of History’, *Teaching History* 25 no. 2 (1991), p. 20-21.

²⁰⁰ Ruby Langford, ‘Aboriginal History’, *Teaching History* 25, no. 2 (1991), p. 19.

continuation of stereotyped assumptions.²⁰¹ Although there were references to Aboriginal culture, and Aboriginal enterprises and initiatives, the study of Aboriginal culture as a means of reinvigorating Aboriginal identity was a peripheral part of the Syllabus. The dominant feature of the Syllabus was contact history which created the potential for division.

This chapter has conveyed that the purpose of including Aboriginal history in the curriculum was that it was considered essential knowledge to encourage active citizens– both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal and contribute to the Reconciliation process. An editorial in *Teaching History* celebrated that the 1992 Syllabus had been past by the Board of Studies after a ‘difficult and traumatic period’ for history in schools.²⁰² Little did they know that the Syllabus document, particularly the Aboriginal history component would become embroiled in fierce public debates concerning the role and purpose of Australian history.

²⁰¹ John Aquilina, ‘Keynote Address to HTA NSW Annual Conference’, *Teaching History* 26, no. 2 (1992), pp. 8-12.

²⁰² HTA ‘Editorial’, *Teaching History* 26, no. 2 (1992), p. 2.

Chapter Three: 'Was this an Invasion?'

One of the changes in the 1992 Syllabus was that the term 'invasion' replaced the term 'settlement' as the normative way of referring to the colonisation of Australia. Although the 'buzzword' 'invasion' attracted criticism before the Syllabus was released,²⁰³ this revisionist perspective on the coming of the British entered schools with surprisingly little fanfare. The 1992 Syllabus objective of studying Aboriginal history was that 'students will gain an understanding of the ways in which Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal people have responded to contact with each other since British *invasion*.'²⁰⁴ The decision to use the term 'invasion' to describe the arrival of the British in 1788 and the subsequent process of colonisation sought to have students consider new, less benign consequences of British settlement as a cause of present-day injustice suffered by many Aboriginal people. By studying the public debate around the use of the term 'invasion' in the NSW History Syllabus we can see how not only the history syllabus had become an object of interest in the 'culture wars', but the classroom itself had become a battleground. 'Invasion' was not just a word on a page, or a historical perspective: it was a keyword that signified a clash of ideas about the function of history in schools. This single word had great prominence and significance in Australia, and a study of its meaning and use reveal how schools became involved in the 'history wars.'

The selection of content in a syllabus document is a choice between the competing desires of reflecting societal attitudes or transforming them. The inclusion of

²⁰³ P. P. McGuinness, P. P., 'Big Brother Writes the Syllabus', *The Weekend Australian* (17-18 August, 1991)

²⁰⁴ New South Wales Board of Studies, *History Syllabus Years 7-10* (North Sydney: Author, 1992), pp. 24-25.

Aboriginal history in the Syllabus did not necessarily require the term ‘invasion.’ The Committee could have retained the traditional ‘settlement’ that most Australians identified with, and thus potentially avoided the ensuing conflict. Or the Committee could have used the term ‘colonisation’ to describe the arrival of the British as having ongoing implications for the present. Some on the Committee declared that the use of the term ‘invasion’ came at the expense of ‘essential historical knowledge.’²⁰⁵ But reflecting societal attitudes was not their goal. ‘Invasion’ was a deliberate attempt to challenge the existing attitudes of Australian people. According to Kate Keeley, it was about changing the thinking of the next generation of parents.²⁰⁶ The difficulty was that it was such a contentious field that politicians and members of the public were hesitant about embracing this challenge to their own assumptions about Australia’s past. This chapter will examine key moments of the debate about the inclusion of the term ‘invasion’ in the Syllabus, and consider why it was so contested. Another contentious aspect of the new curriculum was how history should be taught, which led to the inclusion of ‘inquiry-led’ history that placed as much emphasis on how one arrived at ‘historical truth’ as the historical narrative of what happened. The conflict revealed opposing views on the place of ‘truth’ in history and whether history taught in schools should be politicised in ways, for example, that revealed not only a shameful past but one that continued to cause social injustice. The debate was about who should hold the power to influence the future direction of Australia. Once again, aspects of the history curriculum were subject to debate due to their potential significance in shaping the nature of Australian citizenship.

²⁰⁵ Interview with Richard Waterhouse, cited in Clark, *Teaching the Nation* p. 152.

²⁰⁶ Kate Keeley, Interviewed by Michael Condie (Sydney, 3 August, 2012, (in author’s possession).

Ideological meddling and historical truth

In 1994, dispute about the content and purpose of studying Australian history raged across New South Wales and Australia, particularly over the appropriateness of referring to the arrival of the First Fleet as an ‘invasion.’ The debate was ferociously fought in newspaper columns, on talkback radio, among politicians and even in the annual conferences of union and political groups. Although concerned about the legitimacy of different perspectives of history, the dispute became embroiled in polemic, allegations of ideological bias, and accusations that the nation’s history had been distorted. Absent from the discussion was a consideration of what was actually taught in schools, how it was being taught, and importantly, the purpose of studying history at school.

When Aboriginal History was introduced as a mandatory subject in the 1992 History Syllabus, not all teachers responded with the same enthusiasm as the members of the Syllabus Committee who developed it. This cautious reaction was due to many teachers feeling they lacked the expertise to teach Aboriginal history well and a fear that students would not respond positively to the content.²⁰⁷ These concerns were compounded by the contentious and contemporary nature of the content, with many teachers expressing difficulty with what they saw as the political nature of the new curriculum.²⁰⁸ Notwithstanding these difficulties, the justification for the use of the term ‘invasion’ was backed by *Teaching History*, which published articles justifying

²⁰⁷ Carmel Young, ‘A Walk through the New Years 7-10 Syllabus’, *Teaching History* 26, no. 4 (1992), pp. 24-27; Carmel Young, ‘Rethinking History - Innovation and Change’, *Teaching History* 27, no. 2 (1993), pp. 3-8; Malcolm D. Prentis, ‘Aboriginal History, Heritage and Religion: Some Thoughts on the Junior Syllabus’, *Teaching History* 27, no. 4 (1993), p. 3; Kevin Butler & Adrian Tucker, ‘Aboriginal Views of History’, *Teaching History* 25, no. 2 (1991), pp. 20-21.

²⁰⁸ Christine Halse, et al, *The State of History in New South Wales* (Sydney: History Teachers' Association of New South Wales, 1997), p. 77; Linda Burney, ‘Interviewed by Michael Condie’ (Sydney, 17 August, 2012, (in author’s possession).

this position. Contributors to the journal considered ‘invasion’ an appropriate term to use in the classroom because it described an aspect of the Aboriginal perspective previously missing.²⁰⁹ The inclusion of the term ‘invasion’ did not mean, however, that the term ‘settlement’ to describe 1788 was abandoned. History teacher Brian Thornton considered it appropriate to use the terms ‘invasion’ and ‘settlement’ interchangeably.²¹⁰ In a sample unit of work on Aboriginal history written by the HTA, the term ‘invasion’ was not even used, instead describing the arrival of the British as ‘occupation and settlement.’²¹¹

After about two years without much media attention, the appropriateness of teaching ‘invasion’ in schools was brought into public view following attacks by Queensland’s *Courier Mail* about the use of the term ‘invasion’ in a Social Studies source book to describe the British colonisation of Australia.²¹² In the wake of that debate the media turned its eye to the NSW History Syllabus when *The Daily Telegraph Mirror* reported in February 1994 that schoolchildren were taught to ‘think’ of the ‘more traditional ‘settlement’ of Australia as an invasion against Aboriginal people.²¹³ The editorial decried the use of ‘invasion’ as ‘unfair’ and ‘inaccurate.’²¹⁴ Writing for *The Australian*, conservative commentator Padraic McGuinness also entered the debate.

²⁰⁹ Heather Goodall, ‘History Round Table Discussion’, *Teaching History* 25, no. 3 (1991), pp. 37-41; Kate Cameron, ‘Teaching Aboriginal History, Notes and Teaching Ideas Relating to Mandatory Question 2’, *Teaching History* 26, no. 3 (1992), p. 39.

²¹⁰ Brian Thornton, ‘Aboriginal Birth Sites’, *Teaching History* 26, no. 4 (1992), pp. 18-21.

²¹¹ History Teachers Association of NSW, ‘Australian History Year 7 – 1992’, *Teaching History* 25, no. 3 (1991), p. 51.

²¹² For an in depth discussion of the debate in Queensland, see: Anna Clark, *Teaching the Nation: Politics and Pedagogy in Australian History* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2006); Henry Reynolds, *Why Weren't We Told? A Personal Search for the Truth About Our History* (Ringwood, Victoria: Viking, 1999); Ray Land (ed.), *Invasion and After: A Case Study in Curriculum Politics* (Brisbane: Queensland Studies Centre, 1994).

²¹³ Australian settlement ‘invasion’, *The Daily Telegraph Mirror*, 10/2/1994

²¹⁴ Editorial, ‘Invasion’ a distortion of history’, *The Daily Telegraph Mirror*, 10/2/1994.

Never the one to use adjectives frugally, he claimed that the inclusion of ‘invasion’ was the product of a ‘political propagandistic version of history.’²¹⁵

Other conservative commentators argued that the inclusion of ‘invasion’ was a distortion of history and politically motivated. During a speech recounting the development of the Legislative Council, Leader of the Christian Democratic Party Fred Nile MLC commented on the ‘invasion’ debate. He considered it ‘offensive’ that invasion was used to describe the arrival of the First Fleet. He believed that ‘invasion’ had become a ‘fashionable term’ to use, but was actually a case of ‘turning history upside down’ for in his belief the First fleet was ‘not an invasion fleet, and there was no invasion.’²¹⁶ Duncan Gay, Chairman of the NSW secretariat of the National Party considered that the arrival of white people could not be considered an invasion. ‘This was a settlement. There were children, women and convicts and animals. It was not an invasion.’ Like Nile, he also found the word offensive and deliberately confrontational.²¹⁷ Based on what they saw as the common usage of the word ‘invasion’, they could not see how a small flotilla of boats with convicts and settlers, without a landing army, ranked with the invading armies of history past. Their preconceived understanding of ‘invasion’ left no room for consideration of the Aboriginal perspective and how this small flotilla may have been viewed through the eyes of the first Australians.

²¹⁵ P. P. McGuinness, ‘History of invasion ignores more balanced school of thought’, *The Australian*, 15/6/1994

²¹⁶ Fred Nile, ‘Speech delivered in the (New South Wales) Legislative Council on Governor’s Speech: Address in Reply, 16 March, 1994’, <http://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/prod/parlment/hansart.nsf/V3Key/LC19940316024>, viewed, August 3, 2012.

²¹⁷ cited in Julie Lewis, ‘When Invasion is Settlement’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10/6/1994

The historian Henry Reynolds, who was personally involved in the debates about ‘invasion’ in Queensland, convincingly argued that rather than being an imposition of present political concerns on the past, such debate had been happening since the first days of colonisation and was again re-emerging.²¹⁸ He provided evidence that from 1788, the British viewed the Aboriginal response and use of force as attestation that they considered their arrival an incursion on their land. He argued that this perception of ‘invasion’ was commonplace until the period post Federation when it disappeared from historical accounts and ceased being discussed publically or by historians. Reynolds opined that this occurred because historians became interested in writing nationalistic histories that were more concerned with telling ‘heroic tales’ than confronting the legal and ethical issues the term ‘invasion’ could involve.²¹⁹

The Liberal NSW Minister of Education, Virginia Chadwick considered ‘invasion’ to be an appropriate term to use in the classroom and had supported the History Syllabus Committee in 1992 when they decided to include it.²²⁰ In June 1994 it was revealed that the NSW Ministry of Education pressed the Board of Studies to remove ‘invasion’ from the Syllabus and replace it with the term ‘encroachment.’²²¹ Virginia Chadwick maintained that the suggested changes did not come from her, as she had in fact defended its use in the Syllabus earlier in the year.²²² Yet the inclusion, then subsequent toning down of ‘invasion’ in the draft NSW Primary School Social

²¹⁸ Henry Reynolds, *Why Weren't We Told? A Personal Search for the Truth About Our History* (Ringwood Victoria: Viking, 1999), pp. 164-167.

²¹⁹ Henry Reynolds, ‘Invasion and Settlement: Reflections Based on the Historical Records’, in Ray Land (ed.), *Invasion and After: A Case Study in Curriculum Politics* (Brisbane: Queensland Studies Centre, 1994), pp. 13-18; Henry Reynolds, *Why Weren't We Told? A Personal Search for the Truth About Our History* (Ringwood, Victoria: Viking, 1999).

²²⁰ Linda Burney, Interviewed by Michael Condie (Sydney, 17 August, 2012, (in author’s possession).

²²¹ Julie Lewis, ‘‘Invasion’ softener enrages Aborigines’, *Sydney Morning Herald* 9/6/1994

²²² Julie Lewis, ‘‘Invasion’ softener enrages Aborigines’, *Sydney Morning Herald* 9/6/1994

Studies Syllabus, caused Ms Chadwick to be in the unique position of receiving censure from both sides of the ideological spectrum.

The State National Party Conference passed a motion that condemned the Education Minister for ‘changing the written history of Australia.’²²³ In a move that was narrowly defeated, some of the delegates even tried to amend the motion to accuse her of ‘distorting the written history of Australia by using the word invasion and excluding the proper perspective of settlement or colonisation.’²²⁴ The NSW Teachers Federation then entered the debate, threatening to ban any section of the Syllabus that removed the word ‘invasion.’ They condemned the Ministry of Education’s move to soften the Syllabus as ‘escalating extreme right-wing interference in schooling.’²²⁵ Some teachers opposed the ban. Mr Harvey Rose, teacher at Manly Warringah Teachers’ Association said, ‘We are not in the business of telling teachers they can’t teach things in a certain way...we’re talking fascism when we start banning things.’²²⁶ The senior vice-President of the Teachers Federation, Denis Fitzgerald, reiterated the ideological nature of the debate. He rejected the notion that the ban was fascist, arguing that ‘quite frankly, we are engaging in an ideological struggle with reactionary forces...we cannot be passive.’²²⁷ The ferocity of the language and accusations of ideological wrangling were astounding considering that the disagreement was about the inclusion of a single word in the Syllabus. Read out of context, this dialogue could easily be misinterpreted as a call to rally soldiers in the midst of warfare. The tone was indicative of the ideological battles for control over the representation of Australia’s past in history taught at school and how opposing

²²³ Michael Wilkins, ‘Nationals condemn Chadwick ‘invasion’, *The Daily Telegraph Mirror*, 19/6/1994

²²⁴ ‘Nats condemn Minister’s distortion of history’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20/6/1994

²²⁵ Julie Lewis ‘Teachers Threaten Syllabus Ban’ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 29/6/1994.

²²⁶ Cited in Julie Lewis ‘Teachers Threaten Syllabus Ban’ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 29/6/1994.

²²⁷ Cited in Julie Lewis ‘Teachers Threaten Syllabus Ban’ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 29/6/1994.

groups wanted control over syllabus content. The irony was that amidst accusations of ‘fascism’ and ‘distortion’ groups such as the NSW Teachers Federation were supplanting the democratic means of initiating curriculum change through community consultation, or through the process of liberal democratic government, which were features of the development of the 1982 and 1992 History Syllabi.

Aboriginal groups and academics responded with anger and with equal strength to conservative critics. They argued that Aboriginal history had always existed, it had just been neglected by historians and it was paramount that it was now taught. James Miller, a lecturer at the University of New England unequivocally argued that ‘no matter which way you look at it Aboriginal society has been invaded from 1788 for 205 years...regardless of what you say.’²²⁸ He considered this essential knowledge and argued that it needed to be taught because it was the job of Education Departments to impart the ‘truth’ onto students.²²⁹ Dr George Parsons of the Department of History Macquarie University was as equally emphatic that school children were ‘too important’ to be ‘indoctrinated’ by one of the great lies of history that Australia was settled.²³⁰ Both Dr Parsons and Mr Miller insisted that ‘invasion’ was the only true interpretation of 1788, essentially denying the validity of any alternative interpretation. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner Mr Mick Dodson also opposed the removal of the term ‘invasion’ arguing that it was a ‘historical reality for all of us, whether indigenous or non-indigenous, is the fact that the indigenous lands of this country were invaded.’²³¹

²²⁸ Cited in “Invasion” of Australia must be taught, Aborigines’, *Reuters News* 9/6/1994

²²⁹ Cited in Julie Lewis, ‘Invasion’ softener enrages Aborigines’, *Sydney Morning Herald* 9/6/1994

²³⁰ Letters to the Editor ‘The invasion versus settlement debate’ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 14/6/1994

²³¹ Julie Lewis, ‘Invasion’ row: board was pushed’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 11/6/1994.

The polarised debate raised the perplexing question of historical truth and the nature of historical inquiry. In the 1990s, there was a tendency for the public to see historical truth in two different ways. There were those who believed in the positivist assumption that there was ‘the correct’ knowable truth about the past.²³² Others considered historical truth to be an impossible goal, and that history should be seen as a myriad of possible interpretations. The confusion possibly arose out of a misunderstanding over the role of historical debate, which historians continued to see as an important aspect to determining historical truth.²³³ The historians Ann Curthoys and John Docker, in their evocatively-titled *Is History Fiction?*, confirmed that the role of historians was to strive to discover the truth about the past within the confines of the evidence. By acknowledging the limitations of their endeavours—such as the availability of sources and the context of the time in which historians wrote—debate could follow throwing open new avenues for exploration, with the continuing goal of finding out what happened and analysing why.²³⁴ This idea found its way into the 1992 curriculum, specifically, that students should approach ‘historical truth’ through inquiry-based learning through consulting a combination of primary and secondary sources.

Though the 1992 History Syllabus had not rejected the idea of historical narrative, it now incorporated the idea that ‘historical truth’ was discovered. Students were encouraged to explore multiple perspectives through inquiry-based learning. Rather than prescribing content, the syllabus identified areas of study as ‘Focus Questions’

²³² Ann Curthoys & John Docker, *Is History Fiction?* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2006), pp. 4-6. 221-222. See also: Stuart Macintyre, ‘Introduction’, in *The Historian's Conscience*, Stuart Macintyre, ed., (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2004), p. 4.

²³³ Ann Curthoys, ‘History for the 1990s: An Address to the NSW History Teachers' Association Annual Conference’, *Teaching History* 26, no. 2 (1992), p. 4.

²³⁴ Ann Curthoys & John Docker, *Is History Fiction?* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2006), p. 5.

and ‘Problems and Issues.’ The purpose of the inquiry/question approach was to encourage students to ‘critically and systematically evaluate and interpret evidence, to develop reasoned hypotheses and to form balanced judgements about the past.’²³⁵ This pedagogical technique provided students with a ‘rational framework’ to understand and evaluate contested versions of the past, in order to reach their own conclusion.²³⁶ Inquiry-based learning did not mean that historical truth had been abandoned. Students were still required to base their conclusions on the appropriate application of evidence. Rather the method of reaching historical truth had altered from being transmitted by the teacher or the textbook, to the constructivist approach where the application of historical skills was the method of reaching the truth.

‘You wouldn’t go into the class and say “this is an invasion.”’: What occurred in schools

Debate about the inclusion of ‘invasion’ in the 1992 History Syllabus often neglected to consider the pedagogy of how history was taught in schools. Although the use of ‘invasion’ was designed to challenge previous assumptions about 1788, teachers were not trying to indoctrinate students that ‘invasion’ was the only legitimate term to use. It was part of the inquiry-based approach of the 1992 Syllabus, which meant ‘invasion’ was taught as one perspective among others. This pedagogy encouraged students to discuss, debate, critically examine evidence, empathise and ultimately reach their own verdict about whether the arrival of the British was an invasion or not.

²³⁵ New South Wales Board of Studies, *History Syllabus Years 7-10* (North Sydney: Author, 1992), pp. 10-11. See also: Christine Halse, et al, *The State of History in New South Wales* (Sydney: History Teachers' Association of New South Wales, 1997), pp. 76-77; Robert Parkes, ‘Reading History Curriculum as Postcolonial Text: Towards a Curricular Response to the History Wars in Australia and Beyond’, *Curriculum Inquiry* 37, no. 4 (2007), pp. 384-385

²³⁶ New South Wales Board of Studies, *History Syllabus Years 7-10* (North Sydney: Author, 1992), p. 2; Carmel Young, ‘A Walk through the New Years 7-10 Syllabus’, *Teaching History* 26, no. 4 (1992), pp. 24-27; Albert Marchetto, ‘What Is History’, *Teaching History* 28, no. 4 (1994), p. 17.

The primary source of historical information used in the classroom was the textbook. When the 1992 Syllabus was released, most schools purchased copies of *Checkerboard*, the first textbook published in support of the new Syllabus.²³⁷ It was influential in guiding the content and delivery of information about Aboriginal history in many classrooms across the state. Although the textbook included the term ‘invasion’ it did so in conjunction with the traditional term ‘settlement.’ These terms were used interchangeably throughout the chapter. For example, Europeans were referred to as ‘settlers’ and ‘invaders’ and the arrival of the British was referred to as ‘settlement’ and ‘invasion.’²³⁸ The authors also linked these terms to the historiographical changes, explaining that ‘it is only in recent years that people in Australia have talked about the white settlement of Australia as an invasion.’²³⁹ The authors gave no explanation why they used the terms interchangeably. Perhaps this indicates that they did not think they were doing something controversial. They were simply reflecting the pedagogical goal of including both perspectives to convey a balanced picture of the past. Other textbooks also used the terms ‘invasion’ and ‘settlement’ interchangeably.²⁴⁰

The History Teachers Association also published example units of work to assist teachers with teaching Aboriginal history. Although they were not necessarily HTA or

²³⁷ Carmel Young, Kevin Laws & Michael Horsley, ‘Textbook Usage in the Implementation of the New History 7-10 Syllabus: A NSW Perspective’, in *Australian Teacher Education Association - 24th Annual Conference Empowering the Professional - Politics, Policy and Practice* (Queensland University of Technology, 1994), p. 3.

²³⁸ Michael Pyne, Catherine Anderson, Bruce Clark, Alan Hewitt, Sandra Moore & Christopher Dunshea, *Checkerboard: Themes and Skills in Australian History* (South Melbourne: Longman, 1993), pp. 190-208.

²³⁹ Pyne et al., *Checkerboard*, p. 205.

²⁴⁰ Paul Kiem, *Our Heritage* (Marrickville: Science Press, 1995); Gary Nicholls, Margaret Emmelkamp, Fay Prince & Alan Pollock, *Images of Australian History* (South Melbourne: Thomas Nelson Australia, 1994).

Board of Studies endorsed, they do provide evidence of different strategies teachers considered appropriate to teaching Aboriginal History. Bernie Howitt taught ‘invasion’ by providing students with historical material (including graphic images) that explained the enormity of the British ‘invasion’ on Aboriginal people. She then studied the implications of 200 years of dispossession on the findings of the ‘Aboriginal Deaths in Custody’ Report.²⁴¹ Chatswood High School took a different approach. They taught contentious words by comparing Australia with other cultures. For example, ‘Invasion’ was a single topic, where they considered the arrival of the British in Australia and either the Vikings, Spanish or Normans in 1066.²⁴² These examples are indicative and do not necessarily represent what all teachers were doing in the classroom. It was still likely that there ‘were contrasting versions of our History being taught in schools.’²⁴³

In 1995, the NSW Board of Studies distributed the curriculum support material, *Invasion and Resistance: Untold Stories*, to all schools in NSW to assist with the teaching of Aboriginal history. It was written by members of the Syllabus Committee, the Aboriginal Education Officer at the Board of Studies and teachers. *Invasion and Resistance* was the first teaching kit developed in NSW that was based predominantly on an Aboriginal perspective. The purpose of the teaching kit was to confront this ‘phenomenon of Aboriginal people disappearing from our History.’²⁴⁴ The authors of *Invasion and Resistance* wanted to place Aboriginal people in the history of the nation. The authors did not suggest that the Aboriginal perspective should replace the

²⁴¹ Bernie Howitt, ‘Programming the New Syllabus’, *Teaching History* 27 no. 2 (1993), pp. 23-24.

²⁴² History Staff, Chatswood High School, ‘History Program Years 7 to 10’, *Teaching History* 28 no. 1 (1994), pp. 34-41. See also Peter Sadler, ‘Year 9: Mandatory Questions 2 and 5, Years 7-10’, *Teaching History* 28 no. 2 (1994), pp. 25-33.

²⁴³ Paul Kiem, “The Fascination of Historical Narrative.” *Teaching History* 29, no. 2 (1995), p. 36.

²⁴⁴ Board of Studies NSW, *Invasion and Resistance: Untold Stories: A Teachers Handbook* (North Sydney: Author, 1995), p2.

previous narrative. They were clear that the material should not be considered an attempt at ‘rewriting history’ rather it should be viewed as a contribution to ‘Australian history, and the inclusion of the ‘invisible Australians.’²⁴⁵ The rationale of the resource found support from the new NSW Minister for Education, John Aquilina. He agreed that the resource was not recasting Australian history but was adding the Aboriginal perspective that had an ‘equal’ right to be presented to all who studied history.²⁴⁶ The critical feature of the resource was that it was almost entirely source-based, encouraging students to do history, rather than have history transmitted, which was consistent with the inquiry-based model of the 1992 History Syllabus. A close examination of what these sources were, and how they were integrated throughout the resource will further demonstrate how ‘invasion’ and Aboriginal history was to be taught in schools.

One of the resources, *The Myth of Terra Nullius: Invasion and Resistance –the early years*, endeavoured to confront the absence of Aboriginal voices in historical accounts of Australian colonial history. The authors used ‘Invasion’ as the normative term to describe the colonisation process as a way to include Aboriginal perspectives on the British acquisition of Aboriginal land. The resource contained a comprehensive collection of primary source material covering the early years of colonisation. The authors emphasised that integral to studying this period of history was an understanding that the predominant voices in the source record were British. To overcome this, the resource gave students the opportunity to evaluate the reliability of

²⁴⁵ Board of Studies NSW, *Invasion and Resistance: Untold Stories: A Teachers Handbook* (North Sydney: Author, 1995), pp. 2-5.

²⁴⁶ Cited in Stephanie Raethiel ‘School Kit Stresses White ‘invasion’ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 25/9/1995.

these accounts to consider whether they were an objective account of the past.²⁴⁷ Thus skills used in critiquing and analysing evidence were considered crucial in studying early colonial history. The resource assisted teachers and students with this process. Throughout the pages of the resource there were questions, comments, and tips to help students develop these historical skills.

The goal was that evidence gained from the rigorous analysis of sources would assist students with a better understanding of ‘significant issues and events in the history of relations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, from the point of view of Aboriginal people,’ or in other words, to look at history from ‘the land, not just the ship, the town or the farm.’²⁴⁸ Although the resource presented the Aboriginal perspective, students were not assessed on whether they agreed with the Aboriginal perspective or not. Students had the freedom to come to their own conclusion about the events they studied. For example, when studying Topic Six ‘A Plain and Sacred Right’ students were presented with evidence from people in Britain who thought that the decision to colonise NSW was wrong. Students were directed to ‘examine some of the criticism and use it to develop your own opinion about the question of whether Britain settled or invaded NSW.’²⁴⁹ Students were also encouraged to debate the issues, with contestability considered an aspect of history.

Invasion and Resistance also recognised the legitimacy of oral history, or Aboriginal life stories as a historical source. *I give you this story: Life stories and the telling of*

²⁴⁷ Kevin Butler, Kate Cameron & Bob Percival, *The Myth of Terra Nullius: Invasion and Resistance - the Early Years* (North Sydney: Board of Studies NSW, 1995), p. 1.

²⁴⁸ Kevin Butler, Kate Cameron & Bob Percival, *The Myth of Terra Nullius: Invasion and Resistance - the Early Years* (North Sydney: Board of Studies NSW, 1995), p. 1.

²⁴⁹ Kevin Butler, Kate Cameron, Bob Percival. *The Myth of Terra Nullius: Invasion and Resistance - the Early Years*. (North Sydney: Board of Studies NSW, 1995), p. 42.

Aboriginal History, written by Carmel Young, the chair of the 1992 Syllabus Committee, was designed to introduce students to ‘life stories’ of Aboriginal people in the twentieth century that had been put to print. As Aboriginal history had traditionally been recorded by oral means, this resource aimed to give Aboriginal people ownership of their history, and methods of telling history.²⁵⁰ Recognising that oral history interviews were a new source of evidence for many students and teachers, Young outlined how they should be evaluated, and proposed how they could be incorporated in the classroom.²⁵¹ Importantly, she did not argue that they were immune from historical scrutiny. Students were encouraged to ask questions, critique and consider their usefulness just as they would written sources.

The use of ‘life stories’ in the classroom also assisted with the pedagogical goal of developing historical empathy by understanding the motivations, attitudes and experiences of past individuals. This was a particular concern in the early 1990s. The 1992 Mabo Judgement overturned the concept of terra nullius. This High Court decision reconceptualised Australian legal history and had enormous political and symbolic impact. The decision brought the legacy of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal relations into the national spotlight, and many, including Prime Minister Paul Keating, believed that recognition of this history was fundamental to the process of reconciliation.²⁵² In his seminal Redfern Park Address in December 1992, Keating argued that:

²⁵⁰ Carmel Young, ‘Aboriginal Life Stories’, *Teaching History* 31, no. 3 (1997), pp. 12-19; Carmel Young, *I Give You This Story: Life Stories and the Telling of Aboriginal History*. North Sydney: Board of Studies NSW, 1995, p. 4.

²⁵¹ Carmel Young, *I Give You This Story: Life Stories and the Telling of Aboriginal History* (North Sydney: Board of Studies NSW, 1995), pp. 2-5.

²⁵² Anna Clark, ‘History in Black and White: a critical analysis of the black armband debate’, *Public Intellectual Forum* 75 (2002), pp. 1-11.

‘It was our ignorance and our prejudice, and our failure to imagine these things being done to us...we failed to make the most basic human response and enter into their hearts and minds...imagine if we had suffered the injustice...gradually we are learning to see Australia through Aboriginal eyes.’²⁵³

Keating’s speech became a philosophy behind the inclusion of Aboriginal ‘life stories’ in the classroom. Carmel Young contended that the ‘greatest power’ of these stories was ‘their capacity to answer the questions posed by Prime Minister Paul Keating.’ They connected all learners with the unique experiences of Aboriginal people and the nature and concerns of Aboriginal history.²⁵⁴ Their use in the classroom reflected the change in the 1992 Syllabus that sought to balance master narratives with those of groups and individuals, and to develop historical empathy.²⁵⁵ As well as a philosophy, Keating’s speech, and the Mabo decision also became historical documents to be studied in schools.

Underpinning all the resources in *Invasion and Resistance* was the implication that the history of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people continued to impact the present. The authors argued that the ‘propagation of myths’ and ‘exclusion’ of Aboriginal history from previous school history texts had resulted in the development of negative attitudes towards Indigenous Australians.’²⁵⁶ The goal was that an exposure to the

²⁵³ Paul Keating, ‘Redfern Park Address’, in Michael Cathcart & Kate Darian-Smith (eds.), *Stirring Australian Speeches* (Carlton: University of Melbourne Press, 2004), pp. 317-321.

²⁵⁴ Carmel Young, *I Give You This Story: Life Stories and the Telling of Aboriginal History* (North Sydney: Board of Studies NSW, 1995), p. 1.

²⁵⁵ Carmel Young, *I Give You This Story: Life Stories and the Telling of Aboriginal History* (North Sydney: Board of Studies NSW, 1995), p. 4.

²⁵⁶ Adrian Tucker, *Invasion and Resistance: Untold Stories*. In Board of Studies NSW, *Invasion and Resistance: Untold Stories* (North Sydney, Board of Studies, 1995), p. 4.

history of ‘invasion’ would help combat ignorance and prejudice.²⁵⁷ Similarly, *Checkerboard* promoted a social justice agenda linking past actions towards Aboriginal people to present day racial prejudice, but in a way that hoped for reconciliation.²⁵⁸ The use of the term ‘invasion,’ and the inquiry-based method teaching history was a way of providing students with the knowledge to help them understand and even contribute to discussion about Reconciliation.²⁵⁹ The goal was to make students more thoughtful and active citizens.

The Role of Pride

This dissertation has examined how during the 1980s and 1990s, the notion of educating for active citizen emerged and that the introduction of mandatory Aboriginal history in the 1992 Syllabus was contributing to this goal. By the second half of the 1990s contestation was no longer over the ‘active citizen’ but what was an Australian. Active citizenship had been reimagined in terms of nationalist values, with emphasis placed on the Australian nation as a unified entity. The election of John Howard in 1996, and the context of the developing ‘history wars’, and the ‘black armband’ debate, the history curriculum, particularly the Aboriginal history component, came under attack.

When elected in 1996, Howard set himself the task of reorientating the portrayal of Australian history. Speaking at the Sir Robert Menzies Lecture in 1996, on the Liberal Tradition’ Howard was critical of revisionist scholarship that suggested that most of

²⁵⁷ Carmel Young, *I Give You This Story: Life Stories and the Telling of Aboriginal History*. North Sydney: Board of Studies NSW, 1995, p. 1.

²⁵⁸ *Checkerboard*, p. 190.

²⁵⁹ Davina Woods, ‘Racism, Reconciliation, Rights – The 3 Rs of Indigenous Education in Australia Today’, *Australian Educational Researcher* 25, no. 1 (April, 1998), pp. 53-70; Denis Mootz, ‘Teaching against Racism’, *Teaching History* 30, no. 1 (1996), pp. 7-12.

Australia's history was something to apologise for. Adopting the phrase used by the historian Geoffrey Blainey in 1992, Howard accused revisionist historians of promoting a 'black armband' view of history. He did not deny that Aboriginal people had been treated poorly and suffered great injustice by past governments.²⁶⁰ His concern was that he considered that those aspects of Australian history had been over-emphasised at the expense of Australia's achievements. Howard argued that 'the balance sheet of our history is one of heroic achievement and that we have achieved much more as a nation of which we can be proud than of which we should be ashamed.'²⁶¹ The rejection of guilt, desire for balance, and the projection of a largely proud, heroic version of Australian history became the cornerstone of Howard's perspective on history.²⁶²

The ensuing 'black armband' debate was significant in the way that it became polarised between competing ideological camps. The conflict represented a 'deep schism' within the community, government and historical profession about what should be emphasised in Australia's history, and how one should respond to the past.²⁶³ The role of Aboriginal history in the Syllabus became embroiled in these debates. Two concerns were that the curriculum promoted an overly pessimistic

²⁶⁰ John Howard, *The Liberal Tradition: The Beliefs and Values Which Guide the Federal Government* (Sir Robert Menzies Trust, 1996). Created 2001. <http://menzieslecture.org/1996.html>, viewed 3 May, 2009; John Laws, 'Transcript of an interview with Prime Minister John Howard', Radio 2UE, October 24, 1996.

²⁶¹ John Howard, *The Liberal Tradition: The Beliefs and Values Which Guide the Federal Government* (Sir Robert Menzies Trust, 1996). Created 2001. <http://menzieslecture.org/1996.html>, viewed 3 May, 2009.

²⁶² Mark McKenna, *Different Perspectives on Black Armband History: Research Paper 5* (Canberra: Parliament of Australia, Parliamentary Library, 1997); Wilson, Peter, 'The Politics of History within New South Wales Schools: The Contentious Nature of History Courses from 1880 to the Present', MA(Research) Thesis, The University of Sydney, 2010.

²⁶³ Carmel Young, 'Recasting School History: For Better or for Worse?', *Public History Review* 7 (1998), p. 15; Mark McKenna, *Different Perspectives on Black Armband History: Research Paper 5* (Canberra: Parliament of Australia, Parliamentary Library, 1997); Anna Clark, 'History in Black and White: a critical analysis of the black armband debate', *Public Intellectual Forum* 75 (2002), pp. 1-11.

picture of the nation's past, and that the inclusion of an Aboriginal perspective was political pandering to a minority group at the expense of the national interest.

Reflecting on the situation in Victoria, educationalist Kevin Donnelly was concerned that history in schools placed too much emphasis on 'black armband history.'²⁶⁴ During an interview with John Laws on 2UE three weeks before he delivered the Menzies Lecture, John Howard expressed dismay that 'our children' were being taught that 'we have a racist and bigoted past.' He considered that most Australians rejected the notion that they had were part of a racist history.²⁶⁵ These comments were in reference to the *Invasion and Resistance* resource. Howard's remarks were widely reported in the nation's media, and received condemnation from historians, politicians and teachers, accusing him of censoring history.²⁶⁶ Howard responded to criticisms by reiterating that he was not advocating for a doctored version of Australian history to be taught in school. Speaking at a Graduation Address at the University of Sydney, he claimed his goal was for Australians to have a more optimistic view of the past.²⁶⁷

Howard's version of history had little room for an Aboriginal history of invasion and oppression. He wanted to minimise the recognition of past injustices. He also wanted to return to everyone adopting the habits and traditions of white Australians. Ann

²⁶⁴ Kevin Donnelly, 'The Black Armband View of Australian History', *Agora* 32, no. 2 (1997), pp. 14-17.

²⁶⁵ John Laws, 'Transcript of an interview with Prime Minister John Howard', Radio 2UE, October 24, 1996.

²⁶⁶ Jodie Brough and Stephanie Raethel, 'Demand for 'truth' in Schools', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 25/10/1996; Karen Middleton and Ben Mitchell, 'Mixed Reaction to Howard's Teaching Claim on Black History', *The Age*, 26/10/1996; Emma Macdonald, 'Blacks: PM 'sickens' Tickner', *Canberra Times*, 26/10/1996; *AM*, 'New South Wales: Education Minister disagrees with the Prime Minister's view that the history taught in schools of white settlement and its impact on Aboriginal people is too negative', ABC Radio, October 25, 1996; *PM*, 'Historian discusses the teaching of Australian history to students', ABC Radio, October 24, 1996.

²⁶⁷ Geoff Kitney, Jodie Brough & Mark Riley, 'Let's Look on the Bright Side, Says PM', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 26/10/1996. See also: Gabrielle Chan, 'PM rejects black history doctoring charge', *The Australian*, 26/10/1996.

Curthoys argues that this was a return to the politics of assimilation, where white Australians are the true Australian's and includes other as long as they adopt the values of their white counterparts.²⁶⁸ The renewed emphasis on pride and unity undermined the very reason that Aboriginal history was included in the 1992 History Syllabus. The social justice element - desire to empower previously marginalised students and promote reconciliation - became increasingly lost in the contestation over pride and nationalism.

Content Change, Citizenship Change and Pedagogy Change

The NSW Labor Premier, Bob Carr, a self-proclaimed history enthusiast had expressed concern that the 1992 Syllabus was too heavily focussed on 'politically faddish themes and problems' at the expense of 'core historical knowledge.'²⁶⁹ Concerned over the declining popularity of history in schools in 1995, Carr outlined his intention to reinstate history as an integral component of the school curriculum. He asserted that the new syllabus should be based in narrative and include knowledge and facts rather than methodology.²⁷⁰ Carr's emphasis on narrative-based history was similar to Howard, except unlike Howard, Carr did not believe that the Syllabus should transplant a single narrative.²⁷¹ Carr supported the inclusion of different perspectives, and insisted that certain facts could not be dismissed as 'black

²⁶⁸ Ann Curthoys, 'History in the Howard Era. Talk to Professional Historians Association History House, 133 Macquarie Street, Sydney, 19 July, 2006', <http://www.phansw.org.au/publications/HistoryintheHowardEra2.pdf>, pp. 6-7. See also: Graham, Maddox, *Australian Democracy in Theory and Practice Fifth Edition* (Frenchs Forest: Pearson Education, 2005), pp. 376-377.

²⁶⁹ Bob Carr, cited in Julie Lewis, 'Carr Calls for a Return to Educational Basics', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 6/6/1994; Sandra Olsen, 'Back to basics, schools urged' *The Daily Telegraph Mirror*, 6/6/1994

²⁷⁰ Bob Carr, 'Speech by the Hon. Bob Carr, Premier of NSW, Minister for the Arts and Minister for Ethnic Affairs, at the 75th Anniversary of the Thirroul Railway Institute, 10 December 1995', *Labour History* 70 (1996), pp. 191-97. See also: Alan Barcan, 'Education - the Thirty Years' War', *Quadrant* 43, no. 2 (1999), pp. 80-82.

²⁷¹ Bob Carr, 'Carr on History', *Teaching History* 29, no. 4 (1995), pp. 18-19.

armband.’²⁷² In 1997, the NSW Education Minister John Aquilina outlined the proposed reforms for the new History Syllabus. He explained that the role of history was to help students to ‘gain a clearer understanding of what it means to be an Australian.’ It would also prepare young people to be active citizens, as it was a common citizenship that bound the diverse background of ‘our people’ together.²⁷³

In 1998, the new NSW History Syllabus was released. The mandatory Australian history component doubled from 100 hours to 200 hours and included mandatory civics and citizenship education. The relationship between history and civics and citizenship was much more heavily emphasised than it had been in the 1982 and 1992 Syllabi. Not only did the rationale state that the ‘study of history is essential to the development of informed and active citizenship,’ but throughout the whole syllabus, explicit connections were made between Australian history and citizenship education. Additionally, Citizenship education was embedded in the course objectives that were assessed in an external examination.²⁷⁴

These changes represented a subtle shift in how history might equip Australians as citizens. In the 1980s and early 1990s, the emphasis in citizenship discussion was on the civic responsibilities of citizenship and the ways in which the knowledge and skills of history could enable all students participate in and contribute to different aspects of society. In the second half of the 1990s, discourse about citizenship

²⁷² Bob Carr, ‘The State of History in New South Wales : Launch of History Teachers' Association Report’, *Teaching History* 31, no. 3 (1997), pp. 38-40.

²⁷³ John Aquilina, ‘Speech delivered in the (New South Wales) Legislative Assembly on the Second Reading of the Education Reform Amendment Bill, 26 November, 1997’, <http://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/prod/parliament/hansart.nsf/V3Key/LC19971125040>, viewed September 28, 2012.

²⁷⁴ NSW Board of Studies, Stages 4-5. *NSW History Syllabus* (Sydney: Author, 1998), pp. 6, 9, 12, 16; New South Wales Government, *Securing Their Future: The New South Wales Government's reforms for the Higher School Certificate* (Sydney: Author, 1997), pp. 31-33.

education and history moved from participation to the issue of pride. John Howard's use of history was designed to foster a sense of unity and nationalistic pride, so the idea of citizenship was in some ways reduced to more chauvinistic notions of citizens than had previously been the case.

It is in this context that the changes in the 1998 Syllabus needs to be understood. The 1998 Syllabus echoed the Commonwealth view that school history should consolidate a 'particular view of citizenship underpinned by what it identified as a common set of values.'²⁷⁵ This was evident in the way that the 1998 Syllabus reversed so many of the changes made in the 1992 Syllabus. The inquiry-based structure had been abandoned, and was replaced with considerably more mandated content, structured chronologically. Although history was still considered to help students to understand the present, this goal did not occupy the central position it did in the 1992 Syllabus.²⁷⁶

Significantly, the term 'invasion' was erased from the 1998 7-10 History Syllabus. The removal of the term 'invasion' was symbolic of the shift of how the changes in the 1998 Syllabus thwarted many of the approaches that the 1992 Syllabus took to educating students for active citizenship. There was not a return to the traditional 'settlement' but the term 'colonisation' was used instead. This was interesting, as it did not signify a return to the 1982 Syllabus, yet it was still a rejection of the original purpose for including the term, which was to provide the Aboriginal perspective and to challenge the attitudes of future citizens. The more 'neutral' term colonisation was perhaps a compromise or an attempt to enforce a common view of this seminal event

²⁷⁵ Christine Halse & Ian Simpson, 'Illusions of Consensus: New South Wales Stakeholders' Constructions of the Identity of History', *The Curriculum Journal* 17, no. 4 (2006), pp. 354.

²⁷⁶ NSW Board of Studies, Stages 4-5. *NSW History Syllabus* (Sydney: Author, 1998), p. 6.

in Australia's history. The exact reason the term 'invasion' was removed is still unclear. There was no public statement or reason given by the Syllabus Committee, and until the minutes of the Committee meetings are publicly available the exact reason may not be known for some time. For a word that generated such heated debate only a few years earlier, it was surprising that its removal occurred with very little public fanfare or objection. For example, when interviewed for this thesis, and asked about its removal, Linda Burney was surprised to learn that 'invasion' had been removed at all.²⁷⁷ One member of the 1992 Syllabus Committee opined that there was a change in Board of Studies inspectors who curtailed to conservative critics.²⁷⁸ Although removed from the Syllabus, 'invasion' continued to appear in many of the textbooks developed for the 1998 Syllabus.²⁷⁹

Although 'invasion' was removed, Aboriginal history continued to be a mandatory component of the 1998 Syllabus. It was taught as part of a unit on 'Indigenous Peoples, Colonisation and Contact history' and was integrated into twentieth century Australian history.²⁸⁰ Textbooks and articles published in *Teaching History* strived to teach Aboriginal way consistent with the aspirations of the 1992 Syllabus. These texts stressed that students should know about Aboriginal history to fix disadvantage and promote reconciliation.²⁸¹ The difficulty was that teachers were caught in an education

²⁷⁷ Linda Burney, Interviewed by Michael Condie (Sydney, 17 August, 2012, (in author's possession).

²⁷⁸ Member of the 1992 History Syllabus Committee, Interviewed by Michael Condie (Sydney, 7 August, 2012, (in author's possession).

²⁷⁹ Paul Ashton & Mark Anderson, *Australian History and Citizenship* (South Yarra: Macmillan, 2000), pp. 49, 275; Shafer, Mina, *This Land: Issues in Australian History and Citizenship since 1901* (South Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 162-168.

²⁸⁰ NSW Board of Studies, Stages 4-5. *NSW History Syllabus* (Sydney: Author, 1998).

²⁸¹ Kate Cameron, Jennifer Lawless & Carmel Young. *Investigating Australia's 20th Century History* (South Melbourne: Thomson Nelson, 2000), p. 218; Maureen Anderson, Jeffrey Conroy, Ian Keese & Anne Low, *Retro Active 2: Stage 5 Australian History* (Milton: Jacaranda, 2000), pp. 258-261; Paul Ashton & Mark Anderson, *Australian History and Citizenship* (South Yarra: Macmillan, 2000), p. 317; Jim Fitzgerald, "The Public Role of History : Recent Australian Debate." *Teaching History* 35, no. 1 (2001), p. 12; Kate Cameron, "Citizenship through Military Service." *Teaching History* 35, no. 2

system and a political climate that made a thorough exploration of Aboriginal history almost impossible.

In the opening pages of the account of his personal journey to discover the truth about Australia's history, written in 1999, Henry Reynolds wrote,

‘There were great gaps in what I was taught. It seems from today’s perspective that I learnt very little about Australia itself, certainly not enough to prepare me to be an adequate citizen, a well-informed voter and a participant in public life...Why weren’t we told?’²⁸²

Reynolds argued that the absence of Aboriginal history in his education meant he was not equipped to understand the complex web of social conditions, and relationships between Aboriginal and white Australians. He was certain though, that history was at work, pressing on the present circumstances in multiple ways which we as Australians should at the very least acknowledge.²⁸³ Reynolds reflections encapsulate the core consideration of this thesis. The introduction of Aboriginal history in the 1992 History Syllabus was part of the wider discussion about the intersection between history and active citizenship. By understanding the complexities of the past, the glories, the horrors and all that lay between, there would be hope to achieve the highest ideals of citizenship within the Australian polity.

(2001), p. 9; John Maynard, "For Liberty and Freedom' Fred Maynard and the Australian Aboriginal Progressive Association." *Teaching History* 39, no. 1 (2005), pp. 6-12; Bruce Dennett, "Henry Reynolds: An Overview." *Teaching History* 35, no. 1 (2001), pp. 149-52; Malcolm D. Prentis, 'Myths of Aboriginal-European Relations in the Nineteenth Century', *Teaching History* 32, no. 2 (1998), pp. 62-67.

²⁸² Henry Reynolds, *Why Weren't We Told? A Personal Search for the Truth About Our History* (Ringwood, Victoria: Viking, 1999), p. 2.

²⁸³ Henry Reynolds, *Why Weren't We Told? A Personal Search for the Truth About Our History* (Ringwood, Victoria: Viking, 1999), p. 3.

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