



Grapevine

NATIONAL CURRICULUM

Commonwealth Minister for Schools, Early Childhood and Youth Peter Garrett says the national curriculum will be ready by December. According to the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), which is responsible for the national curriculum, the English, mathematics, science and history curriculum to Year 10, achievement standards, work samples and a range of information and curriculum planning resources will be available from December. As ACARA Chair Professor Barry McGaw explained in a statement, 'Once Ministers endorse the curriculum in December, it will be available for implementation from 2011 by those jurisdictions and schools wanting to commence implementation in 2011. Ministers have previously agreed that the nature and timing of implementation is a matter for individual jurisdictions and schools as long as there is substantial implementation in all schools by the end of 2013.' The Australian Council of the Deans of Science has urged Garrett to postpone implementation for up to 12 more months to allow for further revision of the science curriculum. In a letter, the deans say there are not enough science teachers with the expertise needed to teach the new curriculum and that the draft curriculum 'appears to have been driven more by expediency and the preconceived ideas of the writers. It does not set out a coherent scheme of interest drivers, engaging students in science, and in particular does not satisfactorily articulate the nature, scope and depth of scientific concepts that students are expected to have acquired.' The History Teachers Association of Australia (HTAA) likewise wrote to the Minister to urge him to extend the timeline. In his letter, HTAA president Paul Kiem explained, 'We are anxious to ensure that teachers will be able to deliver engaging and worthwhile courses in classrooms throughout the country. Any judgement about whether or not this will be achievable must be qualified by what can only be described as a neglect of planning for implementation.' As well, develop-

ment of Years 11 and 12 draft documents, was, he wrote, marked by 'an absence of an overall rationale, a very limited evaluation of current senior courses operating around the country and a degree of ad-hoc decision making.'

MUSLIM LADIES' COLLEGE: CLOSED, BUT CLEARED

Anwar Sayed, 50, and his brother Zubair Sayed, 33, in September were found not guilty in the Perth District Court of fraudulently transferring \$355,934 of Commonwealth and state government funding from the account of Muslim Link Australia, a company which ran Muslim Ladies' College in Perth, to a bank account in Pakistan. The school has since been closed. Anwar Sayed was in Pakistan when the money was transferred in 2007, but returned to Perth later that year. The brothers' defence lawyers argued the funding was only for recurrent expenditure such as rent and salary, and that Anwar Sayed was legally entitled to money owed to him. Defence lawyer, Mark Trowell QC, for Anwar Sayed, said his client 'didn't clear out the school account.' 'If he was cutting and running, he would have taken a lot more than 30 per cent and he wouldn't have come back, I'll tell you that,' Trowell told the court. The school was closed down by Western Australia's then Education Minister Mark McGowan in 2007. At the time, McGowan told Perth's *Sunday Times* the decision to close the school related to the standard of education and governance issues. 'An investigation into the operations of the college by the Department of Education Services began in December 2006, following complaints about the conduct of the principal-administrator, staffing of the college and the educational program,' McGowan told the *Sunday Times*. That investigation in 2006 addressed teacher registration and qualifications, educational leadership, the standard of education, the condition of buildings and facilities and enrolment, attendance procedures and concerns about the school governance structure.

BUSINESSES WORKING WITH GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS

Victoria's Minister for Education Bronwyn Pike has provided \$1 million in government funding to establish a new Business Working with Education Foundation and will commit up to \$2 million to match business and philanthropic donations to government schools. Schools that receive funding will be able to spend it on scholarships, mentoring programs and extra-curricular activities, but not on teacher salaries or capital works. Strict guidelines govern the types of business that can make donations and the terms of the donations that they make. In New South Wales, a Public Education Foundation was established by the state government in March last year. Both the Victorian and NSW programs may put pressure on the Commonwealth government to address tax laws. Government schools are not currently considered 'charitable organisations' under Commonwealth tax law. The Victorian and NSW foundations enable businesses to make tax-deductible donations to government schools, but don't mean individuals can make tax-deductible donations.

SEX DISCRIMINATION

The South Australian Equal Opportunity Tribunal late last year ruled on a sex discrimination case involving Adelaide's Pulteney Grammar School. Pulteney, which is now coeducational, in 1999 began offering some fee remission to some girls enrolling at the school. Mary and Spiro Pazios, parents of two boys already enrolled at the school before 1999, lodged the Equal Opportunity Tribunal complaint. In a two-to-one decision, the Equal Opportunity Tribunal ruled that they were not discriminated against because they were already attending the school when the discrimination commenced. The dissenting tribunal member, Hau Yapp, said the boys 'clearly received less favourable treatment' and should have been awarded some fee remission.

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