Supplementary Submission No 41a

INQUIRY INTO REVIEW OF THE NEW SOUTH WALES SCHOOL CURRICULUM

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Date Received: 30 October 2020

Submission relating to government inquiry into the NSW Curriculum Review (referred to below as the Review) by Professor Geoff Masters

Personal introduction: I have been teaching Senior English since 2002 and have marked the HSC every year since 2005 covering all Advanced modules and Extension 1 English. I was made a Judge Marker of Extension 1 English in 2015. It has been my role where I have been teaching for the past few years to field or write questions for school based assessments including compiling the trial HSC examinations for both Advanced and Extension 1 English. For many years I have been involved in creating teaching programs, lately I have been more active in Stage 6 programming for the Advanced and Extension 1 courses. Last year, in 2019, I completed a Master of Educational Psychology at Sydney University and submitted for my major project a critique of the new 2017 Stage 6 English syllabus focusing on NESA's substantial support material. I taught at a state boys' school for my first three years of teaching and have taught subsequently at a number of Private Independent schools in Sydney while also mentoring Beginning and Practicum Teachers. In the last six years in a consulting role, as my interest in Educational Psychology and curriculum grew, and also as the Enrichment Coordinator responsible for extending all students but with a focus on the highest achieving Stage 6 students. In 2019 I instructed 3rd year and post-grad teaching students in educational psychology and programming a unit of work in the evenings at university.

In response to the Chair's discussion paper, items 1.7 and 1.8 for which responses and public comment are sought:

1.8
"Identify key reform goals: use an evidence-based approach to improve NSW school outcomes, de-clutter the curriculum and develop basic/foundational skills and deep knowledge among students."

"Progression points and their implementation"

The evidence for rejecting Masters' "progression points"

A primary concern of this parliamentary committee, of many of the initial submissions to the inquiry, and one that would be shared by teachers and parents is that the proposed reforms to the curriculum be evidence-based. The key drivers of this curriculum reform *are* strongly supported by evidence and research, some such as the critical difference between surface and deep learning phases are based on over four decades of research back to Marton and Säljö in 1976; Cognitive Load theory (which explains and validates so many of the directions of the Review) over the past two decades* has survived, "rigorous tests of falsification, consistent confirmation of existing hypotheses, timely modifications of the theory as required by new data, and generation of new hypotheses." (Paas, van Gog, & Sweller, 2010*) The emphasis on Constructive Alignment is well supported by the work of John Biggs stemming from 1994 and others such as Thomas J. Shuell (1986), "the teacher's fundamental task is to get students to engage in learning activities that are likely to result in their achieving those outcomes." But the key sticking point in relation to evidence appears to be Masters' "progression points" - the lynchpin of his system. There are recommendations to postpone the introduction of "progression points" until the evidence is clear because of concerns that it is logistically

impractical or because it will cause psychological harm if a student perceives of himself as being "off track"'.
First, it should be stated that Masters' approach recommends against 17 year olds sitting in the same class as 13 year olds even though testing shows there is a 6 year difference between the top and lower 10% of student learning levels and attainment in any age based cohort.
Second, what should be strongly reiterated before the perceived logistical complexity of Masters' program overwhelms any progress is that every university, TAFE or training organisation, no matter which country you're in, insists that you pass Anatomy 1 before you move to Anatomy 2 or Excel 1 before being allowed to take Excel 2. That fundamentally it is harmful to the student and to the legitimacy of the qualification if a student can fail every test in Year 11 (as long as they sit them) and still pass into Year 12, and then subsequently with the same level of performance in Year 12, gain the Higher School Certificate. NESA's own HSC marking criteria for a "D" range response characterises it as "limited" e.g. "Expresses limited understanding of ideas about human experiences represented in the prescribed text". Yet a D range response still grants the student the HSC qualification providing at some point (even five years after they took HSC exam) they pass the Minimum Standards test they have been sitting (and can take as many times as needed) since Year 10. The Minimum Standards, only introduced in the last few years, is a very basic test of reading, writing and numeracy as is evident below and is no indication that a student has moved beyond limited if his HSC results at the time showed he was limited.

Sample questions from the Minimum Standards test:

4. There is an extra word in this sentence. Which word is not needed?

A towbar is used to attach together a trailer to a car.

- used
- attach
- together
- to

3. *Did you know he _____ won the award for best player three times?*

Which word correctly completes the sentence?

- did
- has
- have
- will

But of course pushing students up into a course in which they will flounder, be confused and stressed starts well before Year 11. As a Senior English teacher in secondary schools for 18 years, even at high performing well-resourced private independent schools, I have seen the stresses on students and teachers because of this situation. Students and teachers are working harder than ever to counter it but unfortunately some students are resorting to very short term solutions because it is clear they are not succeeding in spite of "canny" differentiating teaching strategies or additional Learning support teachers. *PISA data reveals that our bottom end is failing to meet basic standards and our proportion of high performing students is shrinking.* John Sweller's rightly lauded Cognitive Load theory explains these two phenomena well and they flow from having students at the lower end who are overwhelmed and students at the top who are not being extended and teaching is producing what he calls the "Expertise Reversal effect".

In their 2017 release "Stronger HSC Standards" NESA, however, conceded there was a problem with the syllabus and identified part of it; they promised that in the new Stage 6 syllabus "Plagiarism and pre-prepared responses will also be reduced." and that "The changes were designed to help motivate and challenge students to achieve at their highest possible level, reduce excessive stress and give students more skills and career options." What John Biggs' theories of Constructive Alignment and research revealed over two decades ago were that if examinations don't effectively quash the wrong approach to learning and thinking (rote learning and plagiarising) it will become embedded in the students' approaches because it is (despite what is intended by the syllabus) being taught and learned in order to succeed. Biggs, drawing on research by many (Entwistle, N.J. and Entwistle, D.M. (2003); Ramsden 1992; Elton 1987,) paraphrases it in the following way "Students learn what they think they will be tested on." Biggs and this research have shown; that what you assess will determine the "schemata" the students will construct in their minds as the learning necessary to succeed. Termed "backwash" by Lewis Elton (1987: 92) when it undermines good teaching and contributes to negative outcomes such as "pre-prepared responses, plagiarism and excessive stress"; avoiding backwash is critical therefore to the success of any course. Of the connection between the Intended Learning Outcomes and assessment Hattie (2009b: 6) says, 'Thus, any course needs to be designed so that the learning activities and assessment tasks are aligned with the learning outcomes that are intended in the course. This means that the system is consistent.'

If the PISA data is correct and the high performing Asian countries including Canada are succeeding, all that Australian teachers and students have got better at, is working well with a flawed system and that is "backwash". Because while our results internationally have declined precipitously – at the top end shrinking and lower end growing – our results in the HSC have been trending in precisely the opposite direction: The number of top band "6's" gained in English Advanced have increased THREEFOLD from 4.36% in 2001 to 13.48% in 2019 and the number of students at the lower end, failing to meet the minimum standards as defined by NESA in English Standard, have *decreased* threefold. This has occurred while students have worked harder than ever, becoming more stressed, and resorting to endless shortcuts – at times dishonestly, while their teachers have been similarly taxed. Australian students' have only grown less able to think for themselves, less creative, and less able to solve complex problems in order to prepare themselves for university and work.

So, in summary, our attempts to adapt a Victorian assembly line system of an age based curriculum, introduced by an authoritarian teacher focus mentality with the advent of public education, two hundred years ago, to a culturally dissimilar 21st century school environment are fundamentally mistaken. In spite of being tweaked and worked for the past four decades, learning support at the lower end, gifted and talented at the top, differentiation, student focus,

recognition of prior learning, formative assessments, no grades until the senior years, minimum standards tests, the misconception at its core has not been addressed: It has been harmful to believe and try to make all students equally academically motivated and successful (in raw terms) at both the lower and top ends.

In summary there is no evidence for retaining the current curriculum. A new curriculum should be implemented within four years, not six as recommended in the Review.

1.7

How can untimed syllabuses be implemented?

Implementing Progression Points

Teachers are needlessly concerned about Masters' progression points or what are pejoratively being labelled in my opinion, "untimed syllabuses". What they are dealing with already is much harder. And if properly implemented this Review would, in practice, be a syllabus accurately *timed* to the student's needs and the teacher's capacity to teach to them.

The curriculum cites two school systems, New Zealand and Wales, implementing curriculum delinked from school years, both in their early stages of implementation. But these, the Parliamentary committee posits are insufficient evidence to proceed with such a wholesale change as Masters' review in its entirety.
Australia has produced three of the most influential educational researchers of our time, John Biggs, John Sweller and John Hattie have fundamentally changed instructional design and other country's education systems. Biggs' theory of Constructive Alignment and his SOLO taxonomy influenced Hong Kong and Canada's highly successive education systems. Sweller's Cognitive Load theory has huge currency at the moment, "CLT is one of our best theories. It has been around for many, many years and is now in high interest." (John Hattie 2020). Hattie's over 800 meta-analyses with the triangulation methodologies he devised, synthesising thousands of studies, gave teachers worldwide the hinge-point (0.40) effect size and therefore confidence to adopt and hone numerous teaching strategies such as feedback – "timely, accurate, specific". Australia's initiatives don't need to be validated by another country because the Australian researchers whose work validates this reform have never been prone to gimmicks, fads or risky experiments.

First, it must be stated that while the syllabuses will be written by NESA, the supporting documents – the teaching programs, scopes and sequences, assessment schedules and exemplar school assessments must also be written by NESA as they were for the 2017 English syllabus. NESA's supporting documents for the 2017 syllabus have proven to be of great value because they ensure Best Practice and a consistent standard, and take an enormous burden and responsibility away from schools and schoolteachers. As the Committee Chair proposes it would "be wiser for the Government to require teachers to teach from a certified menu of programs and practices (research and evidence based) and therefore proven to be beneficial to students."

It is not difficult for a teacher familiar with a Stage 6 English classroom dynamic and with experience in programming to envisage how curricula and syllabuses based on progression points, detached from age based cohorts would work. In English Stage 6, each year based

cohort would start with a new set of texts (prescribed in Year 11 and 12) so that the programs and other supporting documents written by NESA could be specific and rich in detail. The Year 11, Preliminary and the Year 12 HSC syllabuses should have within them the different stages of understanding expected of a student at this point in their education, a range broad enough so that the weakest student would be in touch with the teacher and the strongest student still being pushed - but not beyond their capacity. The Welsh system has adopted five steps or progression points to "reflect a capacity to engage with ideas and issues in greater depth, success in tackling more complex problems and being able to grasp more abstract concepts, and becoming more accomplished in performance".
There would necessarily be overlap between the years since not all students will necessarily complete the stage precisely at the end of the year for the teacher to recommend they move up to the next stage. And of course during the course of the year students will move one or two stages at a time but could remain in stages for longer than the term. Programs, Scope & Sequences and assessment schedules would have to be written for all stages. Masters' review wishes to avoid streaming "This is not the Review's intention." but concedes that "temporary" groups could be used. Teachers would find it difficult to manage more than three stages in one class but at the same time it would be desirable for students to be in a classroom with stronger students who could act as mentors in reciprocal-teaching exercises. The Review notes that "some schools may choose to respond to students' varying levels of attainment and learning needs by teaching them in (temporary) groups." "But the Review does not assume grouping is necessary and cautions against any grouping practices that might label students as inherently good or poor learners. Equally, it is not assumed that teachers will develop 'individual learning plans' for all students; the plan for each student's learning is made explicit in the syllabus on which they are currently working."

An example (below) of an overview for designing a syllabus or programming with Progression Points, note how all students, regardless of their Progression Point start with Surface Learning type activities at the beginning of each term with the new text – identifying, defining, ordering, listing and memorising facts about the author, text and context. Research shows Surface learning is necessary at this point. More able students by the third week have moved onto more relational activities, "analyse, explain, predict, contrast, organise, differentiate and construct." As teachers review and assess work by students, they can move them forward or consolidate them at different Progression Points which simply means they move to the different programmed learning activities for that Progression Point in that week of the term. **Importantly note**, how as learning becomes deeper, students become more autonomous employing more metacognitive strategies, which means that teachers can leave these students to their own problem-solving and spend more time in direct instruction with weaker students.

Stage 6: Level of understanding sought by conclusion of term. See English textual concepts **website**	**Stage 6 Year 12 HSC English level of understanding objective:** Students have knowledge of and insight into the textual concepts that underpin the discipline of English, particularly the nature of textuality for their responding and composing. They analyse the relationship between composer, text, responder and context to identify how this affects meaning. **Term 1** **Common module Standard and Advanced: Texts & Human Experiences** Prescribed text – novel : *Nineteen Eighty-Four* by George Orwell
Progression Point of	

student… **see below**	**Teaching and Learning Program – level and kind of activities based on the progression points.** (Thanks to John Hattie, Douglas Fisher, Nancy Frey and John Biggs' SOLO taxonomy)								
	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6	Week 7	Week 8	Week 9 & 10
Student A Surface Acquiring: Unistructural verbs that reflect this initial level of learning (John Biggs, 2010)	**Surface Acquiring Activities** **(**Memorise, identify, recognise, count, define, draw, find, label, match, name, quote, recall, recite, order, write, imitate)	**Surface Acquiring Activities** **(**Memorise, identify, recognise, count, define, draw, find, label, match, name, quote, recall, recite, order, write, imitate)	**Surface Acquiring Activities** **(**Memorise, identify, recognise, count, define, draw, find, label, match, name, quote, recall, recite, order, write, imitate)	**Surface Consolidating** Classify, describe, list, report, discuss, illustrate, select, narrate, compute, sequence, outline, separate	**Surface Consolidating** Classify, describe, list, report, discuss, illustrate, select, narrate, compute, sequence, outline, separate	**Surface Consolidating** Classify, describe, list, report, discuss, illustrate, select, narrate, compute, sequence, outline, separate	**Deep Acquiring** Close reading, analyse, explain, predict, conclude, summarise (precis), review, argue, transfer, make a plan, characterise, compare, contrast, differentiate, organise, debate, make a case, construct, review and re-write, examine	**Deep Acquiring** Close reading, analyse, explain, predict, conclude, summarise (precis), review, argue, transfer, make a plan, characterise, compare, contrast, differentiate, organise, debate, make a case, construct, review and re-write, examine	**Commencing Research project: explaining and scoping**
Student B Surface Consolidating: Multi-structural verbs that reflect this second level of learning (John Biggs, 2010)	**Surface Acquiring Activities** **(**Memorise, identify, recognise, count, define, draw, find, label, match, name, quote, recall, recite, order, write, imitate)	**Surface Acquiring Activities** **(**Memorise, identify, recognise, count, define, draw, find, label, match, name, quote, recall, recite, order, write, imitate)	**Surface Consolidating** Classify, describe, list, report, discuss, illustrate, select, narrate, compute, sequence, outline, separate	**Surface Consolidating** Classify, describe, list, report, discuss, illustrate, select, narrate, compute, sequence, outline, separate	**Deep Acquiring** Close reading, analyse, explain, predict, conclude, summarise (precis), review, argue, transfer, make a plan, characterise, compare, contrast, differentiate, organise, debate, make a case, construct, review and re-write, examine	**Deep Acquiring** Close reading, analyse, explain, predict, conclude, summarise (precis), review, argue, transfer, make a plan, characterise, compare, contrast, differentiate, organise, debate, make a case, construct, review and re-write, examine	**Deep Acquiring** Close reading, analyse, explain, predict, conclude, summarise (precis), review, argue, transfer, make a plan, characterise, compare, contrast, differentiate, organise, debate, make a case, construct, review and re-write, examine	**Deep Acquiring** Close reading, analyse, explain, predict, conclude, summarise (precis), review, argue, transfer, make a plan, characterise, compare, contrast, differentiate, organise, debate, make a case, construct, review and re-write, examine	**Commencing Research project: explaining and scoping**
Student C Deep Acquiring: Relational verbs that encompass a more critical thinking approach (John Biggs, 2010)	**Surface Acquiring Activities** **(**Memorise, identify, recognise, count, define, draw, find, label, match, name, quote, recall, recite, order, write, imitate)	**Surface Consolidating** Classify, describe, list, report, discuss, illustrate, select, narrate, compute, sequence, outline, separate	**Surface Consolidating** Classify, describe, list, report, discuss, illustrate, select, narrate, compute, sequence, outline, separate	**Deep Acquiring** Close reading, analyse, explain, predict, conclude, summarise (precis), review, argue, transfer, make a plan, characterise, compare, contrast, differentiate, organise, debate, make a case, construct, review and	**Deep Acquiring** Close reading, analyse, explain, predict, conclude, summarise (precis), review, argue, transfer, make a plan, characterise, compare, contrast, differentiate, organise, debate, make a case, construct, review and	**Deep Acquiring** Close reading, analyse, explain, predict, conclude, summarise (precis), review, argue, transfer, make a plan, characterise, compare, contrast, differentiate, organise, debate, make a case, construct, review and	**Deep Consolidating** Close reading, concept mapping; discussion and questioning; Metacognitive strategies (e g self-talk) including rich feedback to the learner, reciprocal teaching	**Deep consolidating** Close reading, concept mapping; discussion and questioning; Metacognitive strategies (e g self-talk) including rich feedback to the learner, reciprocal teaching	**Commencing Research project: explaining and scoping**

				re-write, examine	re-write, examine	re-write, examine			
Student D Deep Consolidating: Relational verbs that encompass a more critical thinking approach (John Biggs, 2010)	**Surface Acquiring Activities (**Memorise, identify, recognise, count, define, draw, find, label, match, name, quote, recall, recite, order, write, imitate)	**Surface Consolidating** Classify, describe, list, report, discuss, illustrate, select, narrate, compute, sequence, outline, separate	**Deep Acquiring** Close reading, analyse, explain, predict, conclude, summarise (precis), review, argue, transfer, make a plan, characterise, compare, contrast, differentiate, organise, debate, make a case, construct, review and re-write, examine	**Deep Acquiring** Close reading, analyse, explain, predict, conclude, summarise (precis), review, argue, transfer, make a plan, characterise, compare, contrast, differentiate, organise, debate, make a case, construct, review and re-write, examine	**Deep Consolidating** Close reading, concept mapping; discussion and questioning; Metacognitive strategies (e g self-talk) including rich feedback to the learner, reciprocal teaching	**Deep Consolidating** Close reading, concept mapping; discussion and questioning; Metacognitive strategies (e g self-talk) including rich feedback to the learner, reciprocal teaching	**Deep Consolidating** Close reading, concept mapping; discussion and questioning; Metacognitive strategies (e g self-talk) including rich feedback to the learner, reciprocal teaching	**Transfer** Theorize, hypothesize, generalize, reflect, generate, create, compose, invent, originate, prove from first principles, make an original case, solve from first principles.	**Commencing Research project: explaining and scoping**
Student E Transfer: Extended abstract – verbs that engage deeper learning and critical thinking (John Biggs, 2010)	**Surface Acquiring Activities and Surface Consolidating activities.**	**Surface Consolidating** Classify, describe, list, report, discuss, illustrate, select, narrate, compute, sequence, outline, separate	**Deep Acquiring** Close reading, analyse, explain, predict, conclude, summarise (precis), review, argue, transfer, make a plan, characterise, compare, contrast, differentiate, organise, debate, make a case, construct, review and re-write, examine	**Deep Consolidating** Close reading, concept mapping; discussion and questioning; Metacognitive strategies (e g self-talk) including rich feedback to the learner, reciprocal teaching	**Deep Consolidating** Close reading, concept mapping; discussion and questioning; Metacognitive strategies (e g self-talk) including rich feedback to the learner, reciprocal teaching	**Deep Consolidating** Close reading, concept mapping; discussion and questioning; Metacognitive strategies (e g self-talk) including rich feedback to the learner, reciprocal teaching	**Transfer** Theorize, hypothesize, generalize, reflect, generate, create, compose, invent, originate, prove from first principles, make an original case, solve from first principles.	**Transfer** Theorize, hypothesize, generalize, reflect, generate, create, compose, invent, originate, prove from first principles, make an original case, solve from first principles.	**Commencing Research project: explaining and scoping**

Note: The above program plan for Term 1 (Term 4, calendar year) would cover all classes from the weakest to the strongest if streaming is employed in Year 12, individual classes would comprise students with a learning gap of no more than three progression points between them. By Term 3 it would be expected that some students would have moved to higher progression points so the programming in Term 3 (Term 2 calendar year) would begin the higher progression points earlier. If schools wish to avoid streaming, temporary groupings may nevertheless be needed as the Review concedes – differentiation across more than three Progression Points requires more management and planning.

1.7

How does the NSW curriculum reform process relate to the national curriculum?

1.7
Do theory and practice need to be integrated in all subjects?

3. g) Effectiveness of NESA in curriculum development and supervision

My reading of NESA HSC markers' feedback as a Secondary school English teacher since 2002 and my research as part of my Master's degree in Educational Psychology concluded that NESA have been aware of the problems with the syllabus for well over a decade and by 2013 were consulting with schools on reforming it. The new K – 12 syllabuses introduced from 2014 for the Junior years and then in 2017 for Stage 6 address many of the issues raised for example, the separation of knowledge from its application which is the main theme of the Review. But as I said in the conclusion of my review of the Stage 6 syllabus, they don't go nearly far enough in forcing the application of knowledge – of what Biggs called extended abstract thinking and relational thinking. They did go further than the National Curriculum in adding a sixth language mode, "representing" to the National Curriculum's five: the speaking, listening, reading, writing, viewing. It demonstrates to me that NESA was aware of the need for the application of declarative knowledge in functioning knowledge that is - representing. The introduction of a new module (module C) The Craft of Writing reifies it and a mandatory internal mark allowance underscores its value. If a student is representing an idea themselves they are encouraged to conceptualise it in a deeper way to be able to represent it, especially if it is in a visual or other mode from the original source e.g. choose an image and justify it to represent Hamlet's dilemma.

Too many examinations ask questions in the past have facilitated the regurgitation of a tweaked essay, honed and crafted over at least three months by students, teachers and tutors with many elements plagiarised, written by others and rote learned for the purpose. Examinations questions are drawn from the rubric, from the syllabus, and from the band descriptors and marking criteria and a good teacher can prepare the students for the exam as they should be able to do. But then the HSC exam questions, except on the rarest occasions are so predictable, so lacking in scope and extension that a near full regurgitation of a prepared response is entirely responsible. But when they don't follow this very conservative line the protests from students and teachers aided by media headlines desperate to create a "hot" issue are strident and continuous. 'Incredibly stressful': 'Obscure' first HSC English exam stumps students' (Sydney Morning Herald, Chrysanthos & Baker, 2019) This is a situation not remotely connected to the real world or university where one encounters problems which require an imaginative leap - beyond the frames of familiar references in order to draw on the relational and extended abstract thinking of critical thinkers. All that is being tested with this sort of dull question is a student's ability to memorise and handwrite legibly at a speed sufficient to churn out five/six pages or more in 40 to 45 minutes.

One of the submissions to this inquiry by a Mathematics teacher did, however, claim that if NESA had not added extra components the syllabus would be less cluttered.

1.7

Should post-modernism be taught at our schools?

1.8

Remove all post-modernist, identity-based and political content from syllabuses.

I wrote at length on post-modernism in a previous submission and it is essential that a Year 12 Advanced English student has a clear understanding of the constructed nature of our worldview, and it is even more critical for an Extension student. But while a primary student can understand that how we *represent* something will colour how others see it, post-modernism's arguments about the unreliability or intent, conscious or unconscious, of language, perceptions and context is a challenge to the majority of students. And while Jacques Derrida's "Deconstruction" aims to uncover the hidden truth, the confusing paradoxes, ambiguities and dead-end aporias of its theorising usually only entangle teachers attempting to explain it. Sorting facts from fiction should be the first step in education, deeper examinations when post-modern theory can be invoked may be better left until much later and with highly motivated students. Our virtual world is growing exponentially, students need to be able to discriminate between reality and constructs, or we enter at great risk, the Orwellian nightmare of "alternative facts".

Of course, it is wonderful, as an English teacher to see a student recognise the significance of perception and personal context when Hamlet declares to his school mates, Rozencrantz and Guildenstern that… "there is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so: to me it (Denmark)is a prison." And then ROSENCRANTZ responding as insightfully, **"**Why then, your ambition makes it one; 'tis too narrow for your mind." But leave it there, at "the doors of perception". Unless we prejudice more than enlighten.

To remove all "political content" from syllabuses as proposed in 1.8, however, needs to be clarified as an overarching recommendation. To what extent and according to whose values? It is impossible to remove political bias if we support Western democracy, the rule of law, the rights of man/woman/child and inclusivity in society generally. A teacher's views on the 2nd Amendment of the American constitution and the need for a "militia" in 2020 (not 1791, when it was introduced) may anger some in Australia? Religion is explosive, as we are seeing in France. History teachers and English teachers should avoid identity-politics, although curiously some schools imagine they are creating an identity for their students as part of their "brand" and teachers may be expected to play their part. The latter impinges on the next concern about school's involvement in the well-being of students, not as a responsibility as part of their duty of care, but as a component of teaching.

1.8

Ensure that the 'wellbeing' functions of schools are supplementary to the core functions of student achievement (academic and vocational).

3. c) Whether and to what extent schools should be involved in the 'social and emotional development' of students, as per the Melbourne/Alice Springs Declarations, and growing popularity of 'wellbeing programs' in NSW schools

The following extract from *The Catcher in the Rye* is both amusing and revealing:

"Where I want to start telling is the day I left Pencey Prep. Pencey Prep is this school that's in Agerstown, Pennsylvania. You probably heard of it. You've probably seen the ads, anyway. They advertise in about a thousand magazines, always showing some hotshot guy on a horse jumping over a fence. Like as if all you ever did at Pencey was play polo all the time. I never even once saw a horse anywhere near the place. And underneath the guy on the horse's picture, it always says: "Since 1888 we have been molding boys into splendid, clear-thinking young men." Strictly for the birds. They don't do any damn more molding at Pencey than they do at any other school. And I didn't know anybody there that was splendid and clear-thinking and all. Maybe two guys. If that many. And they probably came to Pencey that way." *The Catcher in the Rye* by J.D. Salinger.

One of the key components of the business and branding model of private independent schools is that they are providing a particular "social and emotional (and moral) development". Their websites are full of claims which read exactly like Pencey Prep's of Salinger's novel, "Raising fine young men since 1893." The Scots College, Bellevue Hill. "It is the aim of all concerned with the administration of the School that all boys should leave the School with a clear understanding of the obligations expected of a Christian gentleman. That which makes Shore different from many other schools is that it adheres to a Christian interpretation of life..", Shore School, North Sydney. Of course, if parents believe that the teachers and other staff at a private independent school are more equipped to imbue their children with certain values than at a government school and can afford to pay for it, they can exercise that choice in Australia's dual education system. But there was no evidence in a very large study into single sex schools conducted in the United States in 2012 that the girls in single sex schools were likely to become "ground breakers" and "leaders" as these schools' blurbs touted. In fact, they more often married early and raised children rather than engaging in professional careers.

1.8

Create Best Practice curriculum use in NSW schools, narrowing the gap between syllabus intentions and what is taught in classrooms.

From my personal experience, because I have taught in many schools and worked with others, I have been shocked a number of times at the poor quality of teaching programs. Some are barely two pages with no explicit teaching instructions week by week, with instructions only to teachers to find their own resources or refer to the department folder (now thankfully online in googledocs). But these resources can be of indifferent quality or value to either students or teachers because they are not curated for the relevance or usefulness by the teacher who wrote the program. Frequently they are from JSTOR (an academic database for university students and lecturers) or from other sources containing an obscure, erudite argument from a student submitting a PhD thesis, of little value or constructive alignment with the syllabus and teaching programs.
The new syllabuses, as university's do, should state the level of understanding in its broadest sense "the progression point" the student needs to achieve to complete this stage of learning. School syllabuses and teaching programs list the objectives and intended learning outcomes to be taught. But as is implied these are intended and the student can move onto the next syllabus as they grow a year older – regardless of whether they have achieved that level of understanding. Something that would not be even contemplated in the interests of the student

or community, let alone allowed at university level or in an electrician's course at TAFE. To this end the English Textual Concepts website has already delineated an expectation of phases of understanding called "Learning Progressions" and "Textual Concepts" aligned to the syllabus stages for the NSW English curriculum. These could be utilised and incorporated into both syllabuses and teaching programs. NESA with the new 2017 syllabus must be commended on the number and quality of the programs and other support materials they have made available on their website, these are the "Best Practice" programs the chair is asking for ... I looked closely at them in a Special Project I did for my Master's degree in Psychology last year. They withstand scrutiny from an instructional design perspective and offer numerous resources. All schools should have access to a minimum standard of programming which they can add to if they wish.

This approach supports the Chair's perspective "The Problem in NSW Schools" as below:

2.82 Wouldn't it be wiser for the Government to require teachers to teach from a certified menu of programs and practices proven to be beneficial to students? The know-how exists to adopt this approach but, in too many schools, it is ignored. John Hattie's extensive research points the way forward, as does CESE's advocacy for what works best. Anything else is a distraction from the main game: scaling up quality teaching and school leadership.

1.7
Do theory and practice need to be integrated in all subjects?

I am not absolutely sure what is meant by this statement in relation to what practice and which theory. But it is a major theme of the Review and a fault in the previous syllabuses which sought the teaching of so called "general capabilities" across different subjects such as "critical thinking". It has been known for decades that critical thinking and problem solving skills are domain (subject) specific. Critical thinking is not a general capability: "Strongly linked to the development of knowledge basics, ***and not separate to it or isolated from it,*** is the development of skills and the capacity to apply knowledge." And a few lines later, "*Such skills cannot be learned in isolation of a knowledge base and must not be thought separate from it."* University of Technology Sydney.

The box below is from the 22 page Executive Summary of Masters' Review.

builds skills in applying knowledge	Separation of knowledge and skills	Integration of knowledge and skills
	Existing syllabuses undervalue and underdevelop skills in applying knowledge. This is reflected in the content of most tests and examinations; the separation of 'general capabilities' from subject knowledge; and the separation of knowledge-based and skills-based learning in the senior years.	Learning in every subject is a mix of theory and application, with no subject focused only on knowledge or only on skills. New syllabuses develop skills in applying knowledge (for example, critical and creative thinking) and provide opportunities for students to develop and demonstrate such skills.

Furthermore, as John Sweller finds, “The characteristics of the learner are only relevant in that what constitutes an element will depend on a learner's knowledge level (Prior knowledge). Multiple interacting elements for one learner with low knowledge levels may constitute a single element for a learner with a higher level of knowledge.” (Sweller, 2010)

This means that differentiation between students is necessary, no matter how that is managed and learning phases, or “Progression Points” is one way of managing it. True, it has not been managed well in Australia as our results show – probably because of an aversion to streaming or banding subjects and this continues in the Review which, “cautions against any grouping practices that might label students as inherently good or poor learners.”

However, the school systems with the highest scores are the Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Hong Kong, Singaporean and some South-East Asian countries; all with decades long entrenched practices of “streaming” or “banding”. Even to the extent that a middle ranked student is forced to take all their subjects at this level. Only recently in Singapore are students being offered some flexibility, offered “subject banding” if they wish to excel in one or two other subjects such as maths or reading. Examinations are extremely rigorous as is competition for selected schools for Gifted and Talented students. China’s national equivalent to the SAT university entrance test is the gruelling “gaokao” – a nine hour marathon that 40% of students fail at the first attempt. It compares to the four hour SAT test used here and in America. Some extracts from a BBC article on Vietnam’s academic rise in Maths in the PISA scores support the basic premise of Masters’ Review in calling for “deep understanding”, decluttering the curriculum, and mastery of core skills to help students “progress with coherence”. Vietnam scores above Australia in all three area, Maths, Reading and Science.

Vietnam's 'stunning' rise in school standards
By Andreas Schleicher
OECD director of education and skills. Published 16 June 2015

“Almost 21% of all government expenditure in 2010 was devoted to education - a larger proportion than seen in any OECD country.”
“The nation's educators have also designed a curriculum that focuses on pupils gaining a deep understanding of core concepts and mastery of core skills.”
“Contrast that with the mile-wide but inch-deep curriculums that you find in much of Europe and North America and you understand why so many of these Vietnamese students excel.”
“In Vietnamese classrooms there is an impressive level of rigour, with teachers challenging students with demanding questions. The teachers focus on teaching a few things well and with a great sense of coherence that helps students to progress.”
“As well as the regular secondary schools, there are specific schools for gifted students. Competition for these schools is extremely fierce.” (Transferwise Blog, October, 2020.)