

To the Review Panel

Congratulations on the bold proposal outlined in the *Nurturing Wonder and Igniting Passion* review for NSW's future school curriculum.

The Australian Learning Lecture (ALL) is a joint project of the Koshland Innovation Fund and State Library Victoria. At its heart is a prestigious lecture series bringing big ideas in education to national attention. Each lecture in the series is a catalyst for a two-year impact program of events, bringing new thinking to public attention. The series features the world's leading knowledge shapers to discuss the biggest issues facing learning today. The decade-long project is designed to strengthen the importance of learning in Australia for all Australians. The Australian Learning Lecture is not politically or commercially aligned.

Our submission to the Review

We concur with the Review's long-term vision: a future school curriculum that supports teachers to nurture wonder, ignite passion and provide every young person with knowledge, skills and attributes that will help prepare them for a lifetime of learning, meaningful adult employment and effective future citizenship.

We support many of the Review's findings including:

- The NSW curriculum is crowded and content heavy, leaving teachers with not enough time and space for effective teaching and attending to individual difference;
- Its acknowledgement of the unhelpful binary between vocational and academic education that presently exists, and the encouragement of a combination of applied and conceptual knowledge informing all disciplines.
- Its acknowledgement of the problems with ATAR in terms of preparing students with skills for our changing world.
- Its acknowledgement of metacognition both in student agency and self-knowledge.
- Its consideration of introducing a major project to assist in deeper learning and applying problem solving and entrepreneurial thinking to a challenging issue.
- Making continuity of learning an objective in every school subject by minimising the impact of transitions between stages and years of school; providing curriculum structures that recognise and accommodate students' varying levels of attainment, regardless of year level; and removing structures that impose ceilings on how far students can progress in their learning.

However, we express caution in the following:

- That reducing content in the curriculum is not merely about buying more teacher time. It is important to ensure that greater attention is given to higher level capabilities in each subject; and that more emphasis should be placed on building skills in relation to content – such as critical thinking, complex problem solving, intercultural understanding.
- Any curriculum reduction will not achieve the intended outcome of deeper and personalised learning unless skills and capabilities are effectively measured.
- That the concept of ‘progression’ as described in the Review does not unwittingly introduce streaming.

Our recommendations that may enhance the excellent work and bold approach taken within the Review are:

- Once the Review is finalised, to roll out a comprehensive communications strategy aimed at parents to explain what the changes are, why they are required, and how they will benefit their children; another communications strategy should be implemented aimed at business to highlight how the new approach will deliver students with a better understanding of the business world together with ‘work ready’ skills and knowledge.
- Rather than progression as highlighted in the Review, consider the adoption of treating the 15-19 year-old-age group as a distinctive phase of education, countenancing students to develop at different times during the last years of schooling, allowing for mastery in some subjects and the need to spend longer on others. In other words, acknowledge that all students have a jagged profile. A phased approach would include helping students to map a pathway to further education, work and life. A phased approach would also recognise and build on young people’s individual interests and aspirations, and provide career guidance to help young people make informed choices about the skills they need for the future.
- Consider the adoption of a trusted, warranted Learner profile which presents a genuine alternative to the current zero-sum-game of ATAR, because it captures the knowledge, skills and capabilities of young people and moves beyond reducing 13 years of schooling to a single, ranked number. A learner profile has the capacity to provide a rich summary of S learning (showcasing strengths, passions, patterns of capability and attainments) which is far better aligned to today’s VUCA world.

We wish you well with your ongoing ambitions for young people in NSW.

With kind regards

Ellen Koshland
Founder, the Australian Learning Lecture.