

# History Teaching for Patriotic Citizenship in Australia

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## Abstract

*History has long been taught in Australian schools with a view to encouraging patriotic citizenship. What has been taught and what is meant by patriotic Australian citizenship has changed markedly over the years. Current national initiatives to stimulate and direct the teaching of “what we all know” to be Australian history may not meet the requirements of acceptable educational practice. The Commonwealth government may be better advised to pursue initiatives that encourage understanding of and commitment to the common weal.*

## Context

Australian schooling looks set to undergo significant changes in 2007 - 8. Both major parties in the Commonwealth Parliament now propose to establish something like a national curriculum for schools that will continue to be administered by the States. If this happens, it will overturn a tradition of the past century and a half by which the various State governments and Catholic education systems have each been responsible for their own distinctive school curriculum.

The current Commonwealth Minister for Education has threatened to cut funding to the States if they do not agree to her requirements for a national curriculum in areas including literacy, numeracy, science and history. The last is particularly interesting because the Minister (at the behest of the Prime Minister) conducted something of a campaign in 2006 to promote a national history curriculum and this has expanded to include some (but not yet all) other subjects. This is peculiar as, since the 1970s, most States teach Social Studies or Studies of Society and Environment up to Year 10. History is only taught in Years 11 and 12 in most schools. The proposed change to history teaching in schools is centralist, conservative and controversial. History teaching in Australian schools has often been controversial.

Speaking in 1886, Mr. William Wilkins, a conspicuous figure in the educational life of New South Wales and then ex-Under Secretary for Public Instruction, asserted that history was one of the subjects which have been introduced into the school curriculum from political motives. “In its true form,” he said, “there is, perhaps, no other subject which is so little fitted to benefit children. (Currey, 1930, p. 7)

Primary school children were not thought to be sufficiently mature to make historical judgements. History had been excluded from the curriculum in Australian colonies due to “differences of view about the Reformation and religious struggles in England. The wave of imperial patriotism in the 1880s also encouraged this subject (history).” (Barcan, 1980, p. 157)

Much of the current government’s emphasis on changing history teaching in Australian schools has been on promoting personal and national identity. This is in contrast to the promotion of literacy and numeracy as means for individuals to achieve functional participation in society and to the promotion of science as a means of enhancing Australia’s competitive advantage in a global economy.

Given the Commonwealth takeover of funding, administrative and policy responsibility for aboriginal affairs from the States in 1967 and the lack of obvious improvements in the well-being of that section of the population as a result, it is not clear why a national curriculum directed by the Commonwealth Minister might achieve the desired outcomes in schooling. Australian universities are also being criticised widely for falling standards in undergraduate courses and the Commonwealth Minister is proposing significant change

in that sector as well. It is not clear how the Commonwealth's takeover of responsibility for the funding, administrative and policy direction of universities in 1974 has led to marked improvement in educational outcomes in that sector either.

Such arguments do not count for much when policy-making is 'faith-based' rather than 'evidence-based'. What counts as a good argument in Australian policy-making is now quite contentious. However, the short-term political goals to be achieved by increased Commonwealth influence over history teaching in Australian schools are quite different from the agenda of a national curriculum more generally and relate directly to the Prime Minister's personal views. These views are similar to those held by a substantial proportion of the Australian population.

The Prime Minister's enthusiastic participation as a member of the Coalition of the Willing in the "War on Terror" in Iraq, his active role in defending Australia's borders by repelling asylum-seeking boat-people, his clever political strategies to defeat the referendum on an Australian republic, and his impassioned efforts to articulate the desirable qualities of an Australian (such that the young and migrants may acquire and be seen to acquire Australian identity and citizenship) have all occurred in the most unusual context of a Commonwealth Liberal Party/National Party coalition government but a Labor Party government in every State and Territory. Thus Commonwealth control or influence over contentious matters is seen as the only way (at present) of ensuring that conservative views will prevail in a number of policy areas, including schooling. The Prime Minister (Howard, 2006b) has attacked the "Black armband view of history" in Australia, attacked the "Black T-shirt view" of Australian culture contained in the display of Australian history in the National Museum of Australia and, through the Minister (Bishop, 2006), he has accused the State and Territory governments of being captives of (Maoist) teachers' unions and so resisting the teaching of narrative Australian history (including significant dates). The Prime Minister (Howard 2006a) has made it clear he thinks that history

is taught without any sense of structured narrative, replaced by a fragmented stew of 'themes' and 'issues'. And too often, history, along with other subjects in the humanities, has succumbed to a postmodern culture of relativism where any objective record of achievement is questioned or repudiated.

In 2007 the Commonwealth sponsored the development of a model history syllabus for Australian schools that opponents suspect is intended to advance the "Three cheers" view of Australian history to enable children to learn what the Prime Minister (Howard 2007) thinks is essential.

I do think there are some things that most of us hold very dear and hold to be the essence of what it is to be an Australian. I think we all embrace and hold very strongly to the fact that this is a great democracy. Australia is one of only a handful of countries, you could count them on the fingers of your two hands, that remained continuously democratic through the entirety of the 20th Century, and that was a remarkable achievement.

It was one of the counties that earlier in time gave full voting rights to women, although it lagged sadly in some parts of the country... in giving voting rights to the first Australians, the Indigenous people. We are a nation that holds very strongly to the rule of law, the independence of the judiciary. We believe very strongly in a free press. .... We believe very passionately in the equality of men and women. ... we do believe in the notion of the fair go, the idea of equality of opportunity. We believe very deeply that a person's worth is determined by their character and by the effort they put in to being a good citizen....

We can debate our history, as we should, but fundamentally the verdict of history is that Australia has been a remarkable success and we have built in this country a great nation, an outward looking nation, a very generous nation and a nation that holds tenaciously to the view

that we should play our part as a good international citizen.

And finally I think most Australians think it's very important that we embrace as our common method of communication with each other a single language, and that is the English language, because citizenship and interaction with each other is impossible unless we can effectively communicate with one another.

It seems clear that the Commonwealth government believes that it is desirable that more children in Australian schools should learn Australian history as part of what (Western Australian Education Department 1936) *The Curriculum for Primary Schools* called the child's Social and Moral Education. In 1936 this comprised History and Citizenship, Geography, and Scripture.

What Australian children should learn about history and what citizenship and patriotism mean for Australians has changed over time. For example, the Citizenship syllabus in 1936 recommended observance of national and other special days including Australia Day, ANZAC Day, Labour Day, Foundation Day (Western Australia), Empire Day, Armistice Day, Goodwill Day, Mothers' Day, Arbor Day, Bird Day, Magna Charta Day and League of Nations Day. Seventy years later, both Australia Day and ANZAC Day have seen a resurgence of public patriotic observance. However, Australia Day falls in the long summer school holidays and so does not feature as part of the curriculum. Labour Day and Foundation Day remain as public holidays of no particular significance, Mothers' Day has been commercialised, United Nations Day exists but the public is unaware of it. The others have disappeared and in their place (unofficially) is the Melbourne Cup Day (horse race).

## **Patriotism**

Patriotism has had its own unique history in Australia and the understanding of what it is to be a patriotic Australian citizen has changed over time. It has also meant different things for different people. Being a patriotic Australian citizen has been different for Indigenous and non-Indigenous persons born in Australia, British migrants, non-British migrants, women and children.

Australian patriotism differs from the understanding of patriotism in other countries insofar as it reflects that unique process of national development and views held by Australians of themselves and their place in the world. If patriotism involves love of country as characterised in the words of the Australian patriotic poem *My Country*, "I love a sunburnt country", and Australia is a continent, does this also include the islands of Tasmania, Cocos (Keeling), Christmas, Norfolk, Macquarie and Heard as well as that part of the Antarctic continent claimed by Australia? Love of country is problematic, even in geographical terms.

William Wentworth (amongst other things, the Editor of the original *The Australian* newspaper) established the Australian Patriotic Association (1835 -42) for the native-born white men of New South Wales to campaign for representative government in place of the appointed Legislative Council that had been established by the New South Wales Act (1823). In 1842 the majority of the Council were elected and the Association dissolved. Responsible government was achieved in New South Wales, Victoria and Tasmania in 1855 and finally in Western Australia in 1890. South Australia (1895) followed New Zealand in giving women the vote but was the first to allow women to stand for parliament. Aboriginal Australians were included with other native-born Australians when Australian citizenship was created in 1949. They gained the right to vote at various times in various States after 1949 and finally in the Commonwealth territories in 1965. All of the constitutional changes were argued in Australia but authorised by Acts of the British parliament.

The Victorian Natives Association (1871) became the Australian Natives Association (ANA) (1872 - 2007) as a mutual provident society for native-born white men (women were admitted in 1900) but from

1880 it also had a political platform advocating federalism in response to perceived threats of expansion by European powers into the Pacific and from Chinese immigration. ANA remained based in Victoria, supported Alfred Deakin (later to become second Prime Minister of Australia), and was instrumental in initiating and furthering moves to form the federated Commonwealth of Australia in 1901, created by an Act of the British parliament.

It was not until the 1890s that the majority of the non-indigenous population was born in Australia. In the nineteenth century, patriotism in Australia was focussed on argument about forms of political organization in Australia and getting the British parliament to authorise desired changes. Australian nationalism based on bush mythology, as typified in *The Bulletin* magazine and *Waltzing Matilda*, gained popular acceptance in the late nineteenth century but did not seek to overturn the status of Australians as British. This nationalism combined and competed with understandings based on Irish Catholic and labouring class traditions that culminated in the formation of the Australian Labor Party and the conscription debates of 1916-17.

The dominant feature of Australian patriotism until 1942 was the evolving role of Australia as a Dominion in the British Empire.

In 1899 the various colonies offered volunteers to serve in the Boer War and subsequently the Commonwealth contributed troops as part of the Imperial Forces in South Africa (1901-2). In 1903 Empire Day was proclaimed and the celebration in schools was a major focus of patriotic attention in many of the British Dominions and Colonies. The Under Secretary for Public Instruction in New South Wales (Board, 1905, p. 78) issued Circular No. 5 informing schools that

The object of this celebration is to bring prominently before the pupils such a view of the British Empire as will help to develop a feeling of pride in the achievements of the British people, and increase the groundwork of knowledge on which an intelligent patriotism may be based.... It is not intended that there should be any encouragement of an exaggerated sentiment arising out of a mere glorification of the British races by the disparagement of other peoples, but that the interest in the Empire should rest on a knowledge of what it is, and on an appreciation of the higher qualities that have played a part in its progress. By this means, also, pupils may be encouraged to become worthy citizens of their own native country, feel a pride in its progress, and an obligation to advance its interests, while, in addition to being patriotic Australians, they may see that they are citizens of an Empire to which they may feel proud to belong.

The celebration usually took the form of lessons on aspects of the British Empire and singing of Rudyard Kipling's 1897 Jubilee Recessional Ode, followed by participation in a community march past and sporting activity.

In 1914 patriotic Australians joined the Australian Imperial Force as British soldiers to fight at Gallipoli and on the Western Front in France. Much of the structure of Empire Day celebration was appropriated in the postwar ANZAC Day remembrance and mourning for those who served in World War One. The words "Lest we forget" in the Recessional took on a new meaning when sung at ANZAC Day ceremonies. The Jubilee Recessional was addressed to "God of our fathers...Beneath Whose awful Hand we hold Dominion over palm and pine..." but the ANZAC Day version redirected attention to those Australians who had served in World War One and subsequent wars. The British inspired Armistice Day observance of a minute's silence and the selling of red poppies to support children of those killed in war, lasted for over 50 years but has since tended to disappear. ANZAC Day has waxed and waned over the years but has recently regained public attention as a day of patriotic celebration as well as remembrance. The legends of Simpson and the Donkey at Gallipoli, the 'chocolate soldiers' on the Kokoda Trail and the POWs on the Burma Railway are an important part of Australian's understanding of themselves. None of these are tales of braggadocio or spectacular victory with bounteous spoils. The irony that is part of the Australian view of the world is

exemplified by the fact that the most important national day commemorates the nation's first major military defeat and horrendous loss of life.

The Commonwealth's predominance over State governments was a consequence of participation in World War One. Australian's perception of patriotic national identity is linked to the ANZAC tradition. National elections and adherence to the ever expanding reach of Commonwealth laws are the substantial connection of Australians with a national identity. National patriotic allegiance was further consolidated by the continuing battles in their "War of Independence" against "The Old Enemy" in the form of cricket Ashes Test matches against England. State loyalty diminished but continued, based on State elections and laws, and is manifest in interstate cricket and football competitions. The Imperial allegiance waned with the Statute of Westminster 1931, the appointment of an Australian as Governor-General, and the Australian decisions in 1942 to withdraw the Second Australian Imperial Force from the Middle East to defend Australia and call upon the United States of America to help in that defence. The Imperial connection ended in the 1960s with Britain's entry into the European Community. The visible remains of the Imperial connection are the Union Jacks in the corner of the Australian and State flags.

In the 1950s the Australian Prime Minister could describe himself as "British to his bootstraps". In the 1960s his conservative successor was "British to his boot heels" but by then Mother England had disowned her family and gone to live with someone else. Australians entering Britain were labelled 'aliens'. Having been alienated, Australian identity has been a significant academic, cultural and political issue for the past 40 years.

In the nineteenth century, to be a patriotic Australian was to be white, native-born and resistant to British authority. In the first half of the twentieth century, the sanctioned Australian patriotic views were held by British subjects proud to be members of the race that maintained an Empire. The term 'British' included the two main oppositional groups in Australia, the English and the Irish. The dominance of these patriotic views was supported by an official White Australia Policy. A language test was available to turn away unwanted migrants. Traditional aborigines, who identified with their tribal 'country', were to be civilised and become patriotic, Christian Australians.

Since World War Two, Australia has pursued a vigorous migration policy to increase the Australian population, partly for reasons of national defence. This migration policy initially centred on climatic migrants from Britain and economic migrants from southern Europe. More recently, economic migrants have come from New Zealand, South Africa and Zimbabwe and ethnic Chinese and Indians from southeast Asia. Refugees in significant numbers have been admitted from Vietnam, Chile and Lebanon. This migration, together with the ending of the Imperial connection, has destroyed the pre-World War Two notion of Australian patriotism. It has also complicated the issue of Australian identity with the attention being on multiculturalism and Aboriginality.

Australian Prime Ministers have been significant players in attempts to redefine Australian identity and national interests over the past 40 years. Whitlam (1972 – 75) was hailed by some as espousing a 'radical nationalism' but Curran (2004, p. 79) claims that

Far from being the great moment of national self-awakening, the 'new nationalism' was a more moderate adjustment to the Australian self-image, one that spoke with greater self-confidence and self-assertion but nevertheless maintained a careful, critical distance from a European-derived concept of nations and nationalism.

Fraser (1975 – 83) was associated with 'new patriotism' and its media campaigns to "buy Australian goods" and to "think Australia, think positively, and accept greater personal responsibility for the advancement of Australia." (Curran, 2004, pp. 181-2).

Hawke (1983 – 91) said, in his final press conference as Prime Minister, that he wished to be remembered as “... a bloke who loved his country, and still does, and loves Australians, and who was not essentially changed by high office.... who in the end is a dinky-di Australian” (Curran, 2004, p. 195). His initial election campaign theme, “Bringing Australians Together”, incorporated themes of reconciliation and consensus that marked his approach to patriotism in a multicultural society.

Keating (1991 – 96) saw one role of his office was to provide the leadership that gave Australians the ideas, ambition and direction to achieve national fulfilment in an era of globalisation. “We occupy a continent and we’re one nation and we’re basically a European nation, changing to adapt to the region.” (Curran, 2004, p. 279). He sought to eliminate the symbolic attachments to Britain by promoting Australian republicanism and to define Australian interests in terms of engagement with Asia. The problem, as he saw it, was that “multiculturalism has combined with the lingering Britishness of the place to circumvent the emergence of a singularly Australian identity to replace the old imperial one.” (Curran, 2004, p. 282). It was, nonetheless, an interesting way of trying to capture the popular imagination to have the Prime Minister characterise Australia as being “at the arse-end of the world.”

Howard (1996 - ) reacted strongly against Keating’s attempt to rewrite history as a “litany of intolerance, bigotry and narrow-mindedness” and to create an national identity. Howard said that Australians “don’t need to be force-fed by those self-appointed cultural dieticians in our midst whose agenda has more to do with divisive political strategies than respect for the facts of history.” (Curran, 2004, p. 345). Instead, he insisted on asserting ‘what we all know’ and on ensuring that all Australian children did know it. “Howard’s claim is to have finally laid to rest the so-called cultural identity crisis... a claim that is sure to be confounded.” (Kelly, 2004, p. xvi).

Irrespective of whether the cultural identity crisis has now been laid to rest, the Prime Minister has sought during 2007 to rewrite the history taught to future citizens in Australian schools.

## **Citizenship**

It was only possible for Australians to be an Australian citizen after 1949 when legislation was passed creating the legal entity ‘Australian citizen and British subject’. In 1984 the Queen of England was also titled the Queen of Australia and Australians were no longer British subjects but, instead, Australian subjects. In tune with the resurgence of enthusiasm for Australia Day and ANZAC Day, Australian Citizenship Day was first held on 17 September 2001 but most Australians do not know of the existence of such a Day or why it should be held on 17 September.

The Australian Government (2007) states that

Most people born in Australia before 26 January 1949 became Australian citizens on that day.  
... Since 20 August 1986, citizenship is acquired if, at the time of the person's birth in Australia, at least one parent is either an Australian citizen or a permanent resident of Australia...

Becoming a citizen is a significant expression of commitment. It is a bond to a way of life, a common purpose and vision for a shared future.

Migrants may apply for citizenship and make the pledge

*From this time forward, under God,<sup>1</sup>*

*I pledge my loyalty to Australia and its people,*

*whose democratic beliefs I share,*

*whose rights and liberties I respect, and*

*whose laws I will uphold and obey.*

Political and legal concern with Australian citizenship is not solely the responsibility of the Commonwealth government as is demonstrated by the fact that the Western Australian state government has a Minister for Local Government; Racing and Gaming; Multicultural Interests and Citizenship; Government Enterprises.

Not all Australian citizens can exercise all rights of citizens specified by the Australian Government (2007) nor are they responsible for some of the specified duties. In some States but not all, being on the Electoral Roll entitles a citizen to vote in local government elections. Children are a significant group of citizens excluded from some of the most important of these rights and responsibilities. This is an important point for attempts to conceive of citizenship as the possession of those rights and responsibilities. It is clearly intended that Australian citizenship is acquired on the basis of birth in Australia or by choice of some other Australian denizens. There are also significant differences between the rights and responsibilities of some citizens and others. Electoral, military and jury rights and responsibilities come into effect at a specific age. Children are not legally responsible until a specified age. So, for children, Australian citizenship provides a right to hold a Australian passport and seek consular assistance but no responsibilities. It does, however, make them eligible for the full rights and responsibilities in the future. Patapan (2000, p. 181) reviewed the three major cases involving questions of Australian citizenship heard by the High Court and concluded that

A major consequence of the Court declining to define citizenship is that the concept of representative democracy remains contested and contestable, subject to the determination of Parliament. Therefore citizenship is potentially indeterminate, assuming different dimensions and multiple layers; the extensive power and freedom of States and the Commonwealth to construe and define citizenship is unaffected.

What also needs to be highlighted is that citizens share with other denizens a wider range of civic rights and responsibilities including the often-quoted rights to good government, peaceful enjoyment of life and property, and protection under the law. All Australian denizens, with the exception of diplomatic passport holders, have a responsibility to obey Australian law. So a conception of citizenship predicated on a relationship of a person and the law of the land is problematic. Even a temporary tourist has the same general legal relationship as does a citizen.

The issue of Australian patriotic citizenship was recently brought into sharper focus when Australian-born and educated citizens of Serbian and Croatian descent clashed at sporting fixtures in Australia. Some went to fight in the war that resulted in the breakup of Yugoslavia. People holding dual citizenship may be liable to military service in two countries.

Australian-Italian citizens living in Australia voted for Australian-Italian candidates standing for the Oceania-Antarctica seats in the recent Italian parliamentary elections. The rights usually associated with Australian citizenship have been thrown into further doubt with questions about the lack of Australian representations for an Australian citizen held for five years without charge and then prosecuted by the Americans for fighting against forces supported by the Americans in Afghanistan.

If Australian citizenship is a commitment (acquired by birth or choice) to “a way of life, a common purpose and vision for a shared future”, then it is important these things are identified and that history teaching in Australian schools is able to contribute to understanding that commitment. Whether history teaching (or other aspects of schooling) can or should engender patriotism to strengthen that commitment is more controversial.

## **History teaching**

A lecturer at Sydney Teachers College (Currey, 1930, p. 10) wrote

By introducing children to the gentlewomen and gentlemen who have become historical figures, we hope to influence beneficially their developing characters. In so far as such historical figures are of the British race, we may strengthen a natural pride which finds additional support in the study of the positive achievements of that race. Nowadays it is fashionable, in certain quarters, to decry patriotism. ... But a just and modest national pride is not incompatible with a generous appreciation of the history of other nations, and a readiness, without any suggestion of condescension, or patronage, or racial superiority, to co-operate with them in the attainment of common laudable ends. ... the teacher can be faithful to his trust, and, at the same time, so present British history as to awaken in pupils a well-balanced admiration for what our race has done and a resolution to transmit unimpaired, and, if possible, enriched, the heritage received. Patriotism of such a quality is to be encouraged.

This view was embodied in the Western Australia curriculum for small rural schools that indicated a study of history was intended to promote pride in being part of the British Empire and its task of bringing British justice to native peoples of the world. The ANZAC tradition, so much a part of Australian identity since 1915, is based on the exploits of the Australian Imperial Force who fought as British, not Australian, troops in World War One. Yet this view of Australia as British was contested, as was indicated by the late nineteenth century nationalist and federalist sentiments, by the Christian Brothers teaching of Irish rather than English history in their schools, and by the 1916-17 conscription campaigns. After 1942 the reliance on Britain was replaced by reliance on America but the public focus was increasingly on being Australian. In 1945 the Australian National University appointed the first lecturer in Australian history.

In the 1950s, history teaching in primary schools became part of the social studies. Also included under the title Social and Moral Education were geography, civics, scripture, safety first and current news. The concept of citizenship in schooling was broader than the narrow legal concept used by the Australian government. According to the Western Australian Education Department (1955, pp. 6 - 7)

The special aims of citizenship teaching may be enumerated as –

- (1) to inculcate habits of good behaviour and right conduct and foster the spirit of the “Golden Rule”;
- (2) to develop in children a sense of social responsibility as a preparation for active participation in community and national life; and
- (3) to give children a general knowledge of social institutions and some of the problems of government....

The course for each standard [Year] sets down suggested topics related to citizenship, but the underlying spirit of citizenship will only develop fully in the school where good citizenship is practised as a real thing in every day exchanges.

The observance of national and international days and class and school assemblies will provide fruitful opportunities for the furtherance of the aims of citizenship.

On the matter of teaching patriotism, the Western Australia Education Department (1955, pp. 4 -5) was forthright

Patriotism is a subject on which divergent opinions are held. In the modern world the old narrow form of patriotism is out moded. But defined in wider terms to include a regard for world welfare, patriotism should form a vital feature in social studies.... Children should accept loyalty to their country as a worthy and noble obligation.... Democracy now... must actively demonstrate its superiority over other ideologies. In this service is ample scope for the true patriot.

Even though these statements were made about integrated Social Studies, they seem quite like what Prime Minister Howard wants schools to do in the newly re-established History and Geography courses.

Social Studies placed less emphasis on Australian history. The kind of history included in the curriculum also changed. The topics selected for study might now include indigenous history, women's history, labour history or social history. The approaches used to deal with the topics might include those influenced by feminism, postmodern relativism, constructivism or critical theory. Students were encouraged to interrogate sources and accepted judgments and to make their own critical judgements.

There were the usual "kids do not know the basic facts that we do" complaints, with little or no attention given to research showing that many professional historians did not know many of the facts that schoolchildren are required to learn that were outside the historian's own area of specialisation. It was issues such as these that led the Prime Minister to decry the 'Black arm band' version of history with its "litany of intolerance, bigotry and narrow-mindedness" and seek to restore teaching the facts of the history we all know as the "objective record of achievement".

It was in the context of the Prime Minister's intervention in the teaching of history in Australian schools that Clendinnin (2006, p. 45) stated

professional historians are increasingly dependent on grants-based research, and subjected to the absurd requirement that projects should be pre-defined in terms of social utility of their yet-to-be-found findings. As more public money comes to be spent on history, and with increasingly confining criteria claiming to measure utility and accountability being applied within universities, the risk is that historians' primary responsibility will be understood to be to the present and the future of the nation and not to the past: that the true purpose of "Australian history" is patriotic and integrative.

Prime Minister Howard may be willing to accept Hobsbawm's (1997, p. 5) claim that

history is the raw material for nationalist or ethnic or fundamentalist ideologies, as poppies are the raw material for heroin addiction. The past is an essential element, perhaps *the* essential element, in these ideologies. If there is no suitable past, it can always be invented.

It will not be surprising if, in suitable circumstances, politicians may participate in or even instigate local versions of 'History Wars' to establish a suitable account of the past to be taught in schools. Politicians may adopt more direct methods in some cases, such as directing the content of school history texts and syllabuses or controlling the practices of schooling and the employment of teachers to ensure outcomes deemed to be favourable.

In an effort to achieve a favourable outcome from Australian schooling, in 2004 the Prime Minister required schools, as a condition of funding, to have a flagpole, fly the Australian flag and display a set of Australian values on a poster portraying Simpson and his Donkey. In 2006 a national summit of invited politicians, historians and teachers considered the current state of history teaching in schools. In 2007 a selected panel is to review a draft national history syllabus with selected milestones. The use of 'milestones' suggests a triumphal progress but, as 'millstones', they suggest an unhelpful constraint on history teaching that might otherwise usefully address the students' question "Why should I want to know this?"

One response to the students' question in a democratic, pluralist country such as Australia is given by Williams (2003, p. 240) "An education for citizenship as shared fate suggests (an) alternative.... Students should first be taught the history of their local communities, and learn first about the literatures and cultures of the people who live in their midst." The current emphasis of the push for a national curriculum framework for Australian history is on secondary school but Williams' suggestion raises the issue of where to start and that is in primary school.

Understanding who we are and the traditions we have inherited is a basis for refining our identity. Understanding others with whom we live and their traditions, together with the accepted ways of interacting with others, is an important part of our social education throughout our life. The school can contribute to that social education, in part, by addressing issues related to patriotic citizenship. Students can achieve some of these understandings by studying history.

### **History teaching for patriotic citizenship**

Brighouse (2003, p. 172) has stated that “My position is that patriotic purposes have no legitimate role in the teaching of history.” He identified four liberal justifications of patriotism

1. Basis of patriotism is shared nationality (like family association)
2. Shared political institutions require partiality to the interests of those who are bound to obey the laws
3. Patriotism is a good thing because it promotes trust as the basis for working with those with whom we disagree
4. Patriotism helps distributive justice because the motive from duty is buttressed by a motive from association

The first two justifications amount to a claim that “we have direct duties to our compatriots that we do not have to others, and if it is true that we do have these duties it is incumbent on us to carry them out, in so far as doing so does not conflict with other, more stringent, duties.” (Brighouse, 2003, p. 161) An objection to this claim is that “in ... countries which have approached egalitarian ideals of distributive justice, class loyalties have played a far greater role than national loyalties, and again, patriotic loyalties have served more to disrupt than to propel the movements toward justice.” (Brighouse, 2003, p. 166) The central objection to teaching patriotism in schools is that “I suspect that whatever the identity being promoted, its promotion jeopardizes the required functions of teaching history, and risks indoctrinating children so that their affirmation of the identity will lack authenticity.” (Brighouse, 2003, p. 166) The risk to the teaching of history arises because “the primary attention of liberal authors of textbooks should be not on directly encouraging identities in, or teaching values to, readers, but on teaching them what happened and teaching them the skills essential to figuring out why.” (Brighouse, 2003, p. 174)

This argument, for rejecting teaching patriotism in schools because of a fear of indoctrination and the possibility of jeopardizing the required functions of teaching history, is significant but not conclusive. As any education has the potential to be indoctrinatory it is not sufficient to show that teaching patriotism has the potential to be indoctrination. Patriotism should not be taught if it is, of necessity, indoctrination. If some forms of teaching patriotism are indoctrination then they should not take place in schools. Brighouse and others should be able to support the teaching of patriotism in such a way as to meet the critical requirements of liberal educators such as Nussbaum (2002, p. 302) who said

We produce all too many citizens who do drag cash boxes around with them, whose imaginations never step out of the counting house. But we have the opportunity to do better, producing Socratic citizens who are capable of thinking for themselves, arguing with tradition, and understanding with sympathy the conditions of lives different from their own.

The objection based on jeopardizing the required functions of teaching history seems based on a misconception of history teaching as teaching what happened and teaching the skills to figure out why. This is a misconception because it assumes that what happened historically is a given rather than a selection from the almost infinite number of events possible for study. The selection of events as ‘historical facts’ is done for various purposes. Encouraging the development of student identities is a legitimate educational purpose

for teaching history. Affirming particular values and strengthening the commitment of students to those values is another.

By removing normative ideals, conceptual frameworks and causal models from any consideration of the selection of historical facts or the process of making sense of the facts, the result is that only one way of seeing, understanding, valuing and behaving properly in the world is possible. Teaching history as a narrative of facts that select themselves as agreed milestones of social, democratic, liberal progress, removes the possibility of understanding the contested nature of social life and contesting historical views. Teaching children that there is only one, non-contentious, way of seeing Australian history is as objectionable as any other form of indoctrination. Vigorously championing one point of view, by whatever means are available, to achieve the outcomes deemed desirable from that point of view, is acceptable behaviour from advertisers and politicians. Educators should be more cautious about accepting these models of outcomes-based behaviour.

Teaching Australian history to children in order that they may become patriotic citizens is not, in itself, objectionable. The particular view of Australian history, the conception of patriotism and citizenship, the values espoused, and the use to which patriotic citizenship is put may, however, be most objectionable.

Teaching Australian history such that children may be rightly proud of the laudable achievements of their forebears, properly sorry for past mistakes and injustices perpetrated, imbued with a goodwill toward or love of their country, and committed to advancing the generally accepted and acceptable interests of the society, would be more than teaching for understanding. It also would be to teach children to have a purpose and a sense of values from which to judge what to do in order to help change their society for the better.

## **Conclusion**

Being a patriotic Australian in the nineteenth century included being a loyal British subject but opposing British non-democratic rule of the colonies. This was part of being a colonial citizen in the civic sense. Being a patriotic Australian in the first half of the twentieth century included being a loyal British subject and an Australian and State citizen in the civic sense. In the second half of the twentieth century, being a patriotic Australian included being an Australian citizen in the legal sense and, after 1984, being an Australian subject.

During all this time it was possible to be patriotic in a jingoistic, chauvinist and offensively nationalist way or to be patriotic by advancing the interests of the country without unwarranted hostility or attitudes of superiority to others and seeking, where appropriate, to engage with others for mutual benefit. It was also possible for a citizen to engage fully in the civic activities available to citizens and others in the community, or to operate passively in the community or, even, merely comply with the legal requirements of citizenship. The quality of the citizenship could vary depending on the civic values motivating the activity. Individual citizens participate in a number of communities, some of which have different political, legal and civic consequences of membership.

Thus being a patriotic Australian citizen is something that has changed over time and subject to variables that influence why and what is done. What schools promoted as patriotic Australian citizenship and how it was promoted, has changed over time.

Whether Australian schools should promote patriotic citizenship depends on whether such an activity is acceptable at all and, if it is, what sort of patriotic citizenship is intended to be promoted and why. As both patriotism and citizenship are politically and socially sensitive topics, it will not be surprising that schools are subject to political and social pressure to teach patriotic citizenship in particular ways to achieve desired outcomes.

What is now not so clear in Australia is who should be in a position to decide what schools teach or what should count as good grounds for such decisions. Australian parents have traditionally accepted that teachers and educational administrators are best placed to make 'academic' curriculum decisions but that parents should have a significant say in how religious, moral and social issues are taught in schools. For national politicians to mandate a uniform Australian history curriculum to teach patriotic citizenship in a pluralist society may require some 'courageous' decisions. Whether educators and parents should accept those decisions is another matter.

Australian children once were required to memorise a list of the Kings and Queens of England. To substitute the Australian Prime Ministers as the subject of such a task, or even a list of "milestone events", would not seem to be a significant educational advance. The study of what the Australian community has taken to be challenges, and the responses it has made to those challenges or issues, is one way of promoting an understanding of the various views the Australian community has taken about the common weal.<sup>2</sup>

That understanding may then serve as a basis for making judgments about the adequacy of the conceptualisation of the challenges and the degree to which the responses were successful. That understanding may also inform students as they seek to develop their own view of the common weal and their commitment to doing what they can to promote it. 'Weal' is an archaic term and the general good has been an obsolete concept for the past 30 years in Australia in the face of rampant individualist consumerism. Current national initiatives to stimulate and direct the teaching of "what we all know" to be Australian history may not meet the requirements of acceptable educational practice.

The Commonwealth government may be better advised to pursue initiatives in teaching Australian history for patriotic citizenship that encourage understanding of and commitment to the common weal.

## Notes

1. All new citizens have the choice of making the pledge with or without the words '*under God*'.
2. 'Weal': (now archaic) variously wealth, well-being, happiness and contrasted with woe. Contextually – "The welfare of a country or community; the general good" Oxford English Dictionary.

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