



28 May 2021

Submission on the draft proposal document Aotearoa New Zealand's Histories in the New Zealand Curriculum

PHANZA

The Professional Historians' Association of New Zealand / Aotearoa (PHANZA) was established in 1994 to support professional historians and their work. It stands distinct from, but closely allied to, the New Zealand Historical Association. It is managed by an elected executive.

PHANZA publishes its newsletter *Phanzine* three times a year and keeps its members, and other parties, up-to-date with events, jobs, conferences and historical news via its website. It makes submissions on matters of importance to its members and the proposed history curriculum is one of those.

At present PHANZA has about 160 members with a wide array of interests and professional careers. There is expertise in various modes of historical presentation including, for instance, research reports, publications, oral recordings, podcasts, websites, exhibitions, lectures, guided walks and interpretive panels.

Members have undertaken work on significant history initiatives over the last 30 years, such as Waitangi Tribunal reports, the Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, the 1993 Women's Suffrage Centenary, Te Ara: The Encyclopedia of New Zealand and, most recently, WW100 - New Zealand's First World War Centenary.

General response

PHANZA is delighted with the incorporation of history into the school curriculum for Years 1 to 10. We see this as an opportunity to transform the understanding of New Zealanders about their past and to bring history into the mainstream of national life. As professional historians, we also hope that this will lead to an upsurge in interest in history as a career.

We welcome the incorporation of Māori histories and ideas into the heart of the proposed curriculum. It has been obvious for decades that this corrective was required for history teaching in Aotearoa New Zealand. This can only be good for the maturation of our nation and it will be an important step on our way to fostering more meaningful Te Tiriti o Waitangi/Treaty of Waitangi partnerships.

We are happy with the concept of 'big ideas' and in the selection of the three chosen, but feel that an additional component should be added to the curriculum that allows teachers and pupils the freedom of open-ended enquiry. The curriculum is highly prescriptive. It is essential that the richness and variety of history as a subject is revealed to teachers and young learners alike.

We support the use of local features and places as the basis for exploring local history, which should be the starting point for history for children regardless of topic, and would like to draw attention to the considerable utility and potential of historical objects held in local museums for teaching complex ideas.

We recognise that the curriculum stands at a relatively high level and that there will be scope for schools and educators, depending on their local circumstances, to take their own approach to meeting the expectations of the curriculum. In that regard, we are supportive of the strong emphasis on rohe and local contexts, provided that appropriate age-based resources are evenly available or in production throughout the country.

We look forward to opportunities in which the expertise of our members can be utilised to create new and inspiring teaching resources.

Issues requiring attention

PHANZA has a number of concerns that we feel should be addressed:

1. As mentioned above, we support the introduction of a fourth big idea, but not necessarily an overarching concept. Instead, we see an opportunity to provide children with a topic that is based on open-ended historical enquiry, i.e. they might create an archive, or set out to investigate a theme that is relevant to their lives, or investigate an old building in their neighbourhood.
2. The curriculum is repetitive and lacks variation between age groups. We feel a broadening of the curriculum, as mentioned above, will help with that.
3. We would like the curriculum to explicitly state that it will cover, to the extent possible, the 600-year history of Māori occupation prior to European migration.
4. We support the inclusion of migration and mobility as central themes. Migration should be clearly defined as inclusive of all cultures and their arrival here, with the primary focus on Māori.
5. The expectations on 5 to 8-year-olds look ambitious i.e. the material looks very complex for that age group and we wonder if a shift to something more foundational would work better. These pupils may be better served by exploring the everyday experiences of children in their localities at selected

points in time as a means to foreground underlying concepts of change and continuity.

6. History changes continually because it is driven by the concerns of the present. For this reason, long-term government funding is necessary to ensure that the content of key digital resources that we know children use, such as Te Ara: The Encyclopedia of New Zealand and the Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, remains up to date and continues to be added to as new knowledge on new topics becomes available. In addition, the digitisation of significant print-based reference works, such as the New Zealand Historical Atlas, should be an immediate priority.
7. Children are noted in the draft curriculum as being present in Aotearoa New Zealand's past on a single date: 6 February 1840. Histories of children and childhood present a significant opening for engaging young learners with the past, especially if these are linked to their experiences. It is essential that the curriculum is populated with children as historical actors in their own rights. This is relevant to the context of the climate crisis and its implications for the prospects of future generations.

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