



TOWARDS A MORE INCLUSIVE AUSTRALIA

The Independent Education Union of Australia strongly rejects and condemns the extremist views which have been advanced in recent times in the national parliament, other public forums and the media about issues of race, immigration and multiculturalism.

Much of this national debate has been characterised by an ignorance of the facts of Australia's history in terms of relations with indigenous Australians and with those from other countries who have settled in Australia.

The union deplores the acts of intimidation and expressions of hatred towards many groups and individuals. In particular the union is very concerned at the school based manifestations of these problems.

The IEUA believes that inadequate social and political leadership around these issues is harmful to the development of an inclusive community which is sensitive to the needs and values of different groups and appreciative of their similarities and differences.

The IEUA believes the legislative framework overseen by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) is vital for the development of an inclusive, decent, fair and democratic society, and together with other anti discrimination legislation should comprise part of the core curriculum of Civics Education in Australia's schools. To that end, high quality curriculum and resource materials, free of institutionalised racist attitudes must be identified and/or developed.

The curriculum must provide teachers with the confidence to tackle discrimination, whatever its form. International evidence shows that equal opportunity policies raise

shows that equal opportunity policies raise standards but cannot work as effectively as they might if the curriculum acts so as to constrain rather than to encourage acceptance of diversity of lifestyles, values and beliefs.

The IEUA believes that school systems, schools, teachers and support staff have a vital leadership role and obligation to practice and promote the ideal of racial equality and to develop and implement anti racist education and sanctions against racial discrimination, prejudice and harassment when they occur in the school community.

The IEUA believes that schools play an important role in the construction, critique and transmission of social values. Fundamental to that process is the opportunity to develop a knowledge and understanding of the history of Australia and to study and appreciate the customs and traditions of various cultures and the contributions these have made to Australia's society.

The IEUA rejects notions which deny or falsely minimise the history of conflict, dispossession and resistance in the relations between the indigenous peoples of Australia and the peoples which progressively arrived from 1788 onwards. Political suppression of this history from school syllabuses is rejected by the union.

The IEUA believes that school authorities should demonstrate their commitment to ensuring a system and whole school approach to combating racism and to strengthening inclusion by providing cross-cultural professional development to heighten the awareness and sensitivity of teachers, support staff and administrators to the needs of children with different cultural backgrounds.

