Learning about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture has existed in Australia for around 50,000 years. The uniqueness of these cultures and the wisdom and knowledge embedded in them are things to be highly valued by all Victorians.

The knowledge and skills that students are expected to develop about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders histories and cultures has a particular and enduring importance.

The Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Inc (VAEAI) has produced a number of resources for schools including ‘Protocols for Koorie Education in Victorian Primary and Secondary Schools’, to assist schools to provide a welcoming environment for Aboriginal community members and how to work respectfully with the Koorie community to enrich schools' teaching and learning programs.

The Department of Education and Training ‘Koorie Cross-Curricular Protocols for Victorian Government Schools’ have been developed to seek to protect the integrity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural expressions and enable all Victorian teachers and students to engage respectfully and feel connected to this identity, available here: http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/support/diversity/Pages/koorieart.aspx

The curriculum content is set out in the content descriptions of different learning areas and is therefore mandatory for schools to include in teaching and learning programs. This resource provides a summary of the learning of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures contained within the content descriptions in learning areas in the Victorian Curriculum F–10. In addition, many content descriptions provide the opportunity to learn about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures in ways that best utilise local resources, expertise and contexts.

Within the curriculum, schools are also provided with elaborations to support their planning. These elaborations give guidance about further opportunities to incorporate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures into teaching and learning programs.

For example, while the teaching of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander texts is only specified in the content description in Levels 7 and 8 in the English curriculum, there are further opportunities to incorporate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander texts across all levels and within many contexts.

The Arts curriculum requires the exploration of art forms, visual and performing, from different social, cultural and historical contexts. It is expected that schools would include learning about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art forms in the teaching and learning program across the levels.

Schools also have the opportunity to include the learning of Aboriginal languages as part of their languages program.
## Victorian Curriculum: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures

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<th>Foundation to Level 2</th>
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| **History**  | • The significance of Country and Place to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who belong to a local area  
• Significance of days and weeks celebrated or commemorated in Australia and the importance of symbols and emblems, including Australia Day, ANZAC Day, Harmony Week, National Reconciliation Week, NAIDOC Week and National Sorry Day  
• The diversity and longevity of Australia’s first peoples and the significant ways Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are connected to Country and Place (land, sea, waterways and skies) and the effects of this on their daily lives  
• The nature of contact between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and others, for example, the Macassans and the Europeans, and the effects of these interactions | • Identify and describe patterns of continuity and change in daily life for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, ‘native born’ and migrants in the Australian colonies  
• Explain the causes of significant events that shaped the Australian colonies, contributed to Australian Federation and the effects of these on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and migrants  
• The nature of convict or colonial presence, including the factors that influenced changing patterns of development, how the environment changed, and aspects of the daily life of the inhabitants, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples  
• The different experiences and perspectives of Australian democracy and citizenship, including the status and rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, migrants, women, and children  
• Significant contributions of individuals and groups, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and migrants, to changing Australian society | |
| **Geography**| • Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Country/Place on which the school is located and why Country/Place is important to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and the ways in which they maintain special connections to particular Country/Place  
• Weather and seasons and the ways in which different cultural groups, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, describe them | • The many Countries/Places of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples throughout Australia, and the custodial responsibility they have for Country/Place, and how this influences views about sustainability | • Influence of people, including the influence of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, on the environmental characteristics of Australian places |
| **English**  | • Understand that English is one of many languages spoken in Australia and that different languages may be spoken by family, classmates and community | | • Understand that Standard Australian English is one of many social dialects used in Australia, and that while it originated in England it has been influenced by many other languages | • Understand that different social and geographical dialects or accents are used in Australia in addition to Standard Australian English |
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| **History** | • How physical or geographical features influenced the development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ communities, foundational stories and land management practices  
• The significant beliefs, values and practices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and cultures including trade with other communities, causes and effects of warfare, and death and funerary customs  
• The nature of sources of evidence about ancient Australia and what they reveal about Australia’s ancient past, such as the use of resources  
• The importance of conserving the remains of the ancient past, including the heritage, culture and artefacts of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples |
| **Geography** | • The spiritual, economic, cultural and aesthetic value of water for people, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and peoples of the Asia region, that influence the significance of places  
• The spiritual, cultural and aesthetic value of landscapes and landforms for people, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, that influence the significance of places, and ways of protecting significant landscapes |
| **Civics and Citizenship** | • Compare how laws are made in Australia, including through parliaments (statutory law) and courts (common law), and explain different types of laws, including executive law (delegated law), criminal law, civil law and the place of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander customary law  
• Examine how national identity can shape a sense of belonging and examine different perspectives about Australia’s national identity, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ perspectives |
| **English** | • Explore the interconnectedness of Country and Place, People, Identity and Culture in texts including those by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander authors |
| **Levels 7 and 8** | **Levels 9 and 10** |
| **History** | • Intended and unintended causes and effects of contact and extension of settlement of European power(s), including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples  
• Causes of the struggle of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples for rights and freedoms before 1965  
• Significance of the following events in changing society: 1962 right to vote federally, 1967 referendum, Reconciliation, Mabo decision, Bringing Them Home Report (the Stolen Generations), the Apology and the different perspectives of these events  
• Effects of methods used by civil rights activists to achieve change for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and the role of one individual or group in the struggle  
• Continuity and change for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in securing and achieving civil rights and freedoms in Australia |
| **Geography** | • Land and resource management strategies used by Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander peoples to achieve food security over time  
• Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ approaches to custodial responsibility and environmental management in different regions of Australia |
| **Civics and Citizenship** | • Explain how Australia’s international legal obligations shape Australian law and government policies, including in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples |