

Sponsor: Korin Gamadji Institute
Refuter: City of Whittlesea

A Bill for an Act relating to Compulsory First Nations Education in Victorian Schools.

To be enacted by the YMCA Victoria Youth Parliament;

Compulsory First Nations Education in Victorian Schools Bill 2021

A Bill for an Act to teach first nations culture in Victorian primary and secondary schools. The aim of this Bill is to add First Nations' education into the Victorian curriculum, teaching students vital information about Australia's history. The current curriculum is whitewashed and lacking in information and history relating to Australia's First Nations peoples. This lack of education may be the root cause of ignorance and racism in Australia towards First Nations people, therefore creating a subject in Victorian schools that normalises and educates students about First Nations culture shall help solve this problem.

This Bill shall create a multitude of subjects that educate students across Victoria in detail about the history of the land they live on. In early years, a general subject that normalises the idea of Indigenous cultures and customs, as well as promoting Indigenous song and ceremony. Then more in-depth subjects shall be taught in high school to provide a clearer understanding of history and delves into topics that are more thought provoking and analytical.

PART I—Preliminary

Clause 1 Purpose

The main purposes of this Act are—

- (a) to normalise Aboriginal cultures and customs within the wider Victorian community;
- (b) to teach young people about First Nations culture;
- (c) to teach the language and culture of the land where the school may be.

Clause 2 Commencement

This Bill shall commence upon receiving assent from the Youth Governor of Victoria.

Clause 3 Definitions

In this Bill, we define the following to mean—

- (a) **First Nations** means Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples;
- (b) **VCE** means the Victorian Certificate of Education;
- (c) **ATSIS body** means the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies body;
- (d) **KESO** means Koories Education Support Officer.

Part II—Establishment

Clause 4 Establishment of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies body

- 4.1 The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies (ATSIS) regulatory body shall be established and sit within the Department of Education and Training.
- 4.2 The ATSIS body shall oversee the implementation of the following—
- (a) the development of an Indigenous studies curriculum for Victorian students from Foundation to Year 10;
 - (b) a new VCE subject focusing on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies.
- 4.3 The ATSIS body shall be made up of a majority of First Nations peoples, who have vast experience in a wide range of areas.

Clause 5 Indigenous studies in primary schools

- 5.1 Indigenous studies shall be made compulsory for students in Foundation to Year 6—
- (a) students in Foundation to Year 2 shall learn about First Nations culture through music and dance;
 - (b) students in Years 3 to 6 will learn about art and symbols used in indigenous art.
- 5.2 These lessons shall be taught by elders in the local community or the local Koorie Education Support Officer (KESO)—
- (a) should an appropriate representative not be available, the ATSIS body shall organise a suitable replacement.
- 5.3 Lessons shall not be greater than one hour per week.
- 5.3 Teachers shall have professional development opportunities be made available by the ATSIS body.

Clause 6 Indigenous studies in Victorian secondary schools

- 6.1 First Nations studies shall be made a compulsory class for students in Years 7 and 8.
- 6.2 Lessons shall be incorporated into the humanities section of the Victorian curriculum, adding on to the pre-existing Indigenous studies section. The below topics shall be a particular focus—
- (a) the stolen generation and the impact on future generations;
 - (b) the importance of the 1967 and 1962 referendums;
 - (c) the different language groups of Australia;
 - (d) the cultures and customs of the First Nations peoples of the land on which schools are situated.

- 6.3 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies shall be an elective class for Years 9 and 10.
- a) lessons shall be comprised of the following topics—
 - (i) Teaching in depth culture about the land;
 - (ii) Indigenous people in history;
 - (iii) The stolen generation and the impacts on the language, and loss of culture;
 - (iv) Colonisation from the eyes of Indigenous peoples
- 6.4 A new VCE subject focusing on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies shall be introduced for Year 11 and 12 students.
- 6.5 Teachers shall have access to a range of professional development opportunities to help them integrate First Nations perspectives in the classroom.

Clause 7 Teaching of local language

- 7.1 The language of the land the school is situated on shall be taught as part of LOTE classes in secondary schools. It shall be taught in Years 7 and 8 as an additional subject separate to the humanities subject—
- (a) if the land that schools are living on has a complete language that can be taught then it shall be integrated into a new LOTE class;
 - (b) in the event that the people of the land that a school is on does not have a complete language, the closest that is complete shall be studied instead—
 - (i) a small part of the curriculum shall be dedicated to the history of the land's language and its eventual loss over time.
- 7.2 The local KESO shall help with the teaching of the language as well as elders from the community.
- 7.3 It shall be the school's responsibility to source appropriate teachers for the LOTE class. Should a school not be able to fill the position, the ATSYS body shall provide an appropriate teacher.

Clause 8 Normalising Indigenous culture campaign

- 8.1 An education campaign shall be created to help promote Indigenous cultures and customs in Victorian schools.
- 8.2 The ATSYS body shall also create a campaign to support young First Nations peoples in becoming teachers and KESOs.
- 8.3 A 'Blak History' podcast shall be established to support the curriculum implemented in schools—
- (a) it shall be hosted by two Indigenous hosts;
 - (b) it shall look at Australia's history from an Indigenous lens.