

Do English teachers oppose moves to strengthen the study of Australian literature?

Compare what was said in *The Australian* to what is actually in the ETA submission

What <i>The Australian</i> said	What the ETA submission actually said
ENGLISH teachers oppose moves to strengthen the study of Australian literature in schools	<p>While the ETA believes that there is already adequate representation of Australian literature taught in NSW schools in years K-11, members are happy to see its presence <i>further</i> strengthened under such circumstances that</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ recognise the range and fluidity of media of textual production in the early 21st century and ▪ accord with the conceptual design of current NSW English syllabuses.
with their professional association arguing it confers a superiority over the literature of other cultures.	<p>ETA members have conveyed their surprise at this initiative as they believe that Australian literature is richly evident in NSW English syllabuses and is already emphasised in schools at every possible opportunity.</p> <p>ETA members strongly object to <i>the binary</i> established in which Australian literature is privileged over other texts and the literature of other cultures</p>
In a submission to a review of the NSW syllabus, the English Teachers Association of NSW says its members also object to giving privilege to print literature above other forms, including film, television and websites.	<p>While we have no issue with ... (the definition of 'literature') remaining an open definition, and indeed in these times of change believe it is prudent that it remain so, we are disturbed by the reductive modifications applied to it in this document which, by their nature, tend to exclude contemporary literary works. These modifications are most evident in</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ the abandonment of the term 'text' when dealing with Australian literature. This cuts across the conceptual foundations of the syllabus whose central purpose is for students to come to understand how meaning is made in and through texts. At students' level of experience, this is best done through judicious comparison to highlight similarities and differences. This puts Australian literature outside students' other textual experiences and as such, can only be detrimental to their cultural understanding and appreciation ▪ the privileging of 'print medium'. This stipulation harnesses Australian literary achievements to an important technology, but one that no-longer enjoys the cultural predominance it once enjoyed. For some time, the term has lost its stability and its exclusive hold on the literary. Does drama count as the print medium given the fact that, through performance, it exceeds it? Where does electronic literature sit in this or graphic novels? What about electronic versions of previously printed texts, particularly given significant digital archive projects being undertaken as a way of returning to us Australian works which have long been out of print?... ▪ the exclusion of forms and media which are consistent with the definition of literature but go beyond the print medium. This fails to recognise artistic achievement in other modes and media such as film, text in performance, graphic novels and animated poetry.
In particular, it opposes the introduction of a mandatory module on Australian literature in the extension English course for Year 11. It argues that most students do not take extension English so the module is a limited response to moves to strengthen the study of	<p>the 'highest level' of inclusion should involve all students and suggest that literature can be made explicit by</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. including a reference in the course requirements <p>In the Preliminary English (Standard) and (Advanced) courses, students are required to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • study Australian and other texts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Undertake a study of Australian literature <p style="text-align: center;">or</p>

Australian literature.

2. adding another course objective
- Students will come to **value and appreciate**:
- **The importance of Australian literature to the world of ideas and artistic expression**
3. or developing an additional outcome

6. A student engages with a wide range of texts to develop a considered and informed personal response.

6. Students learn about the ways they can respond to texts by:

- 6.1 engaging with a wide range of texts in personal, social, historical, cultural and workplace contexts
- 6.2 relating responses to aspects of human experience
- 6.3 composing personal responses to texts and considering the responses of others
- 6.4 discussing and reflecting on the wider issues arising from their engagement with texts.

6a A student engages with a range of Australian literary texts for various and specified purposes

6a Students learn about Australian literature by

- 6a.1 reading and responding personally to a selection of Australian literature**
- 6a.2 comparing Australian literature to other Australian texts or to literary texts from other countries**
- 6a.3 considering the value of these texts as 'Australian' or as 'literature'.**

or

4. making it the core of the Area of Study which is the 'highest level' attained by the majority of students as it is the most challenging part of the Standard course and an integral (40%) part of Advanced.

An Area of Study is the exploration of a concept that affects our perceptions of ourselves and our world. **In the Preliminary course, the exploration of this concept springs from a work of Australian literature.**

or

5. adding it to a requirement for electives

The electives require students to explore the ways particular texts, forms, media, contexts or aspects of language shape meaning.

The electives are developed by teachers to allow for:

- their students' needs, interests and abilities
- choice of approach • choice of texts for study
- student–teacher negotiation of content.

In the Preliminary Course at least one elective must involve a selection of Australian literature.

Each of these suggestions

- highlight the study of Australian literature
- blend naturally into the conceptual design of the syllabus and
- ensure a study of Australian literature for *all* students.