



Home Economics Institute of Australia Inc.

Position paper Home economics and the Australian Curriculum October 2010

Fast facts

- The central focus of home economics is the wellbeing of individuals and families in their everyday living. Home economics education takes an action-oriented, empowerment approach that enables students to build capacity for critical and creative approaches to decision-making and problem-solving related to fundamental needs and practical concerns of individuals and families, both locally and globally. In an ever-changing and ever-challenging environment that puts centre stage issues such as food security, emotional health, sustainability, consumer excesses and a widening poverty gap, one of home economics education's unique strengths is that it prepares students to respond to a range of real-life challenges. Its other unique strength is its practical orientation, which for many students provides opportunities for concrete achievements and increased self-esteem.
- Home economics makes a valuable contribution to secondary education across Australia and should be recognised by ACARA and the schooling sector as a discipline area in its own right.
- The Home Economics Institute of Australia Inc. (HEIA) recommends that the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) develops national guidelines for home economics education in Years 7–10 in Australian schools to support quality practice in home economics education.
- These guidelines would:
 - use a home economics lens to integrate and build on learning in ACARA's *Health and Physical Education* and *Design and Technology* syllabi
 - include specific home economics concepts, content and processes not necessarily accommodated in these learning areas.
- The guidelines would enable sectors and/or schools to develop home economics-related courses to meet local needs.
- HEIA offers its services in the development of these guidelines.

1.0 Introduction

The Home Economics Institute of Australia (HEIA) is the peak professional body for home economics professionals in Australia. Formed in 1993, the Institute has a growing membership of approximately 1500, with members in every state and territory. The majority of members are teachers. In addition, there are state-based home economics professional associations.

This position paper has been developed for ACARA to inform its thinking on matters related to home economics education and the upcoming Australian Curriculum. The paper is a result of wide consultation with members of HEIA through paper and electronic questionnaires, face-to-face focus groups held in every state and territory and web conferencing.

The statements made about home economics education in this paper do not necessarily reflect current practice across Australia. Rather, they reflect the essence of what practice should be like in a new era, with new guidelines to guide this practice.

2.0 Defining home economics education

The central focus of home economics is the wellbeing of individuals and families in their everyday living.

Home economics education takes an action-oriented, empowerment approach that enables students to build capacity for critical and creative approaches to decision-making and problem-solving related to fundamental needs and practical concerns of individuals and families, both locally and globally.

In an ever-changing and ever-challenging environment that puts centre stage issues such as food security, emotional health, sustainability, consumer excesses and a widening poverty gap, one of home economics education's unique strengths is that it prepares students to respond to a range of real-life challenges. Its other unique strength is its practical orientation, which for many students provides opportunities for concrete achievements and increased self-esteem.

Home economics education is about students learning how to become independent, how to connect with others, and how to take action towards futures that support individual and family wellbeing. Students bring together practical and cognitive capabilities and address increasingly complex challenges related to everyday living—for example, those challenges related to human development and relationships, food, textiles and shelter and their impact on physical, social and emotional health. At one level, the focus of the challenge is how to achieve goals to enhance personal and family wellbeing. On another level, home economics education is concerned with challenges related to societal practices and structures, processes and systems that favour some groups more than others. Students learn to promote a more socially-just and sustainable society as they come to understand how their own actions and those of corporate organisations and governments impact on the wellbeing of individuals and families, both locally and globally.

In making their decisions, home economics students are concerned with the moral and ethical dimensions of human problems and their solutions.

The HEIA definition of home economics education aligns with that of the International Federation for Home Economics (IFHE) which states that all home economics subjects and courses of study must exhibit at least three essential dimensions:

- a focus on fundamental needs and practical concerns of individuals and family in everyday life and their importance both at the individual and near community levels, and also at societal and global levels so that wellbeing can be enhanced in an ever-changing and ever-challenging environment
- the integration of knowledge, processes and practical skills from multiple disciplines synthesised through interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary inquiry and pertinent paradigms
- demonstrated capacity to take critical/ transformative/emancipatory action to enhance wellbeing and to advocate for individuals, families and communities at all levels and sectors of society (IFHE, 2008).

As stated by the Queensland Studies Authority (QSA, 2010), the belief that today's actions and attitudes determine present and future wellbeing is central to Home Economics.

3.0 Current positioning of home economics in the schooling sector

Currently home economics-related subjects are offered in all states and territories across Australia in the secondary years of schooling, featuring varying content and pedagogical approaches.

Typically, across all Australian states and territories, it is a school-based decision whether to offer a holistic home economics subject, or specialisations within home economics—for example, Food for Living, Food Technology, Fashion by Design, Human Development, Early Childhood Development, Family Studies.

Since the inception of national approaches to curriculum dating back to the mid 1990s, home economics education has traditionally been aligned with two learning areas: *Health and Physical Education*, and *Technology*. States and territories differ in the formal curriculum documents that are used in home economics faculties. In some, teachers work from *Health and Physical Education* and *Technology* curriculum documents. In others, specialist home economics-related curriculum documents are used.

The past fifteen years has shown that offering home economics through *Health and Physical Education* and *Technology* is fraught with difficulty. In some cases it has become splintered and fragmented and most importantly, lost its interdisciplinary nature and, in some cases, its focus on the wellbeing of individuals and families. Home economics is best implemented in a way that not only draws from elements of *Health and Physical Education* and *Technology*, but also draws on those aspects of home economics not accommodated in these learning areas.

4.0 Positioning home economics in the Australian Curriculum

The position of the Council of HEIA in relation to home economics and the Australian Curriculum, is that home economics makes a valuable contribution to secondary education across Australia and as such, should be recognised by ACARA and the schooling sector as a discipline area in its own right. The ever-changing and ever-challenging nature of society (see section 5.0) is placing increasing demands on young people to enable them to be critical and creative decision-makers as they address the practical and cognitive demands of everyday living. This is the domain of home economics.

There should be national guidelines to support quality practice in home economics. Greater consistency across the states and territories would provide a shared platform as the basis for professional conversations, professional-learning and the development of resources.

The proposed guidelines should build on relevant aspects of the *Health and Physical Education* (HPE) and *Design and Technology* (D&T) syllabi but also include learning specific to home economics. They would:

- use a home economics lens to integrate transdisciplinary theoretical and practical learning
- ensure practical, meaningful learning that goes beyond knowledge and understanding and recognises the importance of an action-oriented, empowerment approach towards wellbeing
- include aspects of home economics not necessarily accommodated in other learning areas—for example, the importance of families, practical food preparation, and consumer and financial literacy.

The guidelines would be applicable to a range of system or school-developed courses, regardless of whether offered as Home Economics, Food for Living or any other specialisation of home economics. Each would have the underpinning philosophy of the wellbeing of individuals and families.

The changes in policy in the United Kingdom regarding ‘cooking in schools’ are well documented by Caraher and Seeley (2010) and note the need to urgently retrain teachers and equip schools for food and nutrition studies after a decline in teaching home economics. There is an opportunity through the Australian Curriculum to prevent the need for similar catch-up measures in Australia.

HEIA offers its services to write the proposed guidelines. HEIA has a wealth of expertise in curriculum development with its members having been involved in the Curriculum Corporation projects *Home Economics in Secondary Schools* and *Family Studies*, and the development of curriculum documents across Australia. HEIA has produced its own resources *Home economics education: Making it work, A curriculum framework for home economics in the junior secondary school*, as well as the highly successful school text *Nutrition—The inside story*. It has a culture of consultation and a commitment to collaborative development of resources. Members of HEIA have been invited to speak at international forums on the future of home economics, as well as on home economics pedagogy and elearning.

5.0 Societal context for home economics education

As we move through the new millennium, young people need the knowledge, skills and attitudes developed in the study of home economics. Home economics education has the potential to play a major role in supporting young people to participate effectively in changing social, cultural and economic times. An overview of some major societal trends indicates the ongoing need for home economics education.

5.1 Family structures and how families function

Changes to how families are structured, and how they function, point to many more people either living by themselves or within a small family base, exemplifying the importance of the development of life skills such as those developed in home economics courses of study. Similarly, the range of societal issues that impact on families call for educating and empowering young people to develop practical, creative, personal and interpersonal skills that support their physical, social and emotional wellbeing and better prepare them for diverse futures. In preparing for the future, students need to clarify their values related to a range of topical, family-related issues such as same-sex parenting, teen parenthood, stem-cell research, respect for other people's property and homelessness. The need for emotional strength, independence and life skills has never been so important. All of these are the domain of home economics.

The following examples indicate the changes and challenges confronting young Australians:

- Shift from extended to nuclear and other family types
- Rise of one-person households and of cohabitation (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2010)
- Falling fertility rates (Hayes, A., Weston, R., Qu, L., & Gray, M., 2010)
- Migration, and resultant social and consumer issues for some migrant families
- Increase in gambling and alcohol and drug use
- Increase in violence and homelessness
- Increase in adolescent depression and childhood bullying including cyberbullying
- Increase in divorce rates, although these have stabilised since the 1980s (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2008a)
- Increase in the number of older persons (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2009a)
- Smaller-size households (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2010)
- Increase in age at first marriage (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2008b).
- Better educational and employment opportunities for previously marginalised groups such as women and Indigenous Australians
- Men and women on double shift, poor work-life balance, time poor
- Higher levels of disease risk factors in people living in rural and remote areas compared to those living in cities (AIHW, 2010c).

5.2 Food and nutrition issues

In an era of unprecedented local and global food and nutrition issues, the importance of the centrality of food literacy education, a key component of home economics courses of study,

is brought sharply into focus. Food literacy education approaches food and nutrition education from a positive orientation of encouraging healthy eating, rather than 'fixing' problems that arise from unhealthy eating.

Current local and global issues related to food security and nutritional health include the following:

- The 2007 Australian National Children's Nutrition and Physical Activity Survey (Department of Health and Ageing, 2007) found that the children surveyed demonstrated a low level of observance of the *Dietary guidelines for children and adolescents in Australia*.
- Allergies, additives and reading food labels continue to confound some families, with unethical marketing making it even more difficult to make wise consumer choices.
- Research indicates a decline in cooking skills and a possible link with food security.
- Food accounts for approximately 30% of Australia's ecological footprint.
- Availability of better nutrition choices declines with remoteness of location in Australia.
- Diet-related diseases continue to be a major lifestyle issue and economic concern in Australia. The following indicate the severity of the outcomes of diet-related diseases:
 - Approximately 23% children aged 2–16 years and 62% adults were considered overweight or obese in 2007 surveys (Department of Health and Ageing, 2007; ABS 2009b), with Australia now being ranked as one of the fattest developed nations.
 - Obese young Australians are subject to bullying and social exclusion.
 - Heart, stroke and vascular diseases kill more Australians than any other disease group, with Australians in the most disadvantaged groups most vulnerable.
 - The proportion of Australian adults with diet-related risk factors for cardiovascular disease is high: 60% overweight, 51% high blood cholesterol, 30% high blood pressure and 8% diabetes and in 2007 it was estimated that one-third of cancers were attributed to poor diet, inadequate physical activity, alcohol and overweight and obesity (WCRF, 2007).
 - In the 2004–05 National Health Survey, 699 600 Australians reported having diabetes, with rates increasing in all age groups. Rates of Type 2 diabetes in some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are among the highest in the world.

In an era when much food preparation occurs outside the home and for some, an unhealthy reliance on fast food, the home economics classroom provides opportunities for students to develop cognitive and practical skills to support a healthy lifestyle and come to understand the importance of food and nutrition for physical, social, emotional and intellectual development.

5.3 Consumerism

Consumer trends are the concern of home economics, especially as they pertain to food, fashion and household expenditure. The following points indicate the need for informed and ethical consumer decision-making and the need to challenge marketing that creates social pressures and promotes unsustainable and unhealthy consumption patterns.

In Australia in 2004, food and non-alcoholic beverages were the biggest single household expenditure item, with an average \$153 spent per week (17% of goods and services). 25% (\$42) of this expenditure was on meals out and takeaway food whilst only 5% (\$11) was spent on vegetables (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006).

At the same time, the fashion industry has created a culture of the throw-away society, promoting new clothing for every season, with many not understanding the implications for the environment, or the impact of cheap clothing on people in sweatshops or in the clothing trade in other countries.

As personal and household consumption grows, environmental pressures also grow (OECD, 2002) with increased use of natural resources, energy, transport, packaging, overall waste, pollution and greenhouse gas emissions. Home economics education is ideally placed to promote the concept of 'good citizen' along with being a 'good consumer' so that ethical decision-making takes account of wider societal impacts, especially as they pertain to food consumption (packaging, food miles, processed and take-away foods), textile consumption ('disposable' fashion, low-impact fibres and processing, recycling, biodegradability, packaging), the use of energy within the home and overall waste.

In the October 2009 Nielsen Global Online Consumer Survey, when asked which of a list of items respondents would continue to do when the economic conditions improved, the top three items were:

- try to save on gas and electricity (50%)
- cut down on takeaway meals (37%)
- switch to cheaper grocery brands (32%).

There is no indication that these trends have discontinued, and are all items that are the concern of home economics.

5.4 Generation Y (born 1982–2002) social and consumer trends

The fascination of young Australians with the internet and digital social networking comes with advantages and disadvantages, and runs parallel to changes in the way relationships are conducted, changes in purchasing options and increasing number of young Australians experiencing mental health issues. At the same time, young Australians are often confident, optimistic, team-oriented and achieving. With discussions about families, peers, interpersonal relationships and a range of social issues related to people, food and textiles, the home economics classroom provides a unique context for Gen Y to channel their optimism into collaborative discussion about values and choices related to real-world, important issues.

As reported in the Herald Sun (July 2008) Gen Ys, our students and young professional colleagues, are great consumers. Of the record 3.7 million new credit-card applications in 2007, almost a third were from those aged 18 to 27. However, a third of people failing to pay their bills are Gen Ys. At around the same time, The Age (2008) reported Gen Ys have an urge to update and seek instant gratification with new fashion, fast food, brand names etc, all adding to unnecessary and often unwise consumption patterns. With two of its content bases being food and nutrition and textiles and fashion, home economics is ideally placed to challenge instant gratification and promote ethical and responsible consumer and financial literacy with this young generation.

6.0 General capabilities (21st century skills) developed in home economics

Home economics attends to the general capabilities identified by ACARA (2009), both in pedagogy and in the application of to everyday living.

As noted by Street (2006), home economics learning experiences enable students to develop a number of general capabilities, making connections between their daily lives and their future world, and strengthening their understanding of the interconnectedness of dependence, independence and interdependence within families and society. Street adds that research undertaken in New Zealand identifies a philosophical shift in practice and pedagogy for home economics, with positive outcomes for students. This shift includes encouraging students to clarify their own ideas, make their own decisions, use critical analysis, reflect on their learning, use research tools and strategies, explore issues, encourage discussion and group work, and ensure '*higher order tasks involving the generation, application, analysis, and synthesis of ideas*' (Hipkins & Conner, 2005 in Street, 2006). Given the similarities of home economics education in New Zealand and Australia,

there is reason to believe that these shifts have also occurred in Australia.

The table below provides examples of how the general capabilities, as cited by ACARA, are developed in home economics contexts.

General capabilities	Examples of how the capability is developed in home economics education
Literacy and numeracy	<p>Home economics learning experiences enable students to develop literacy and numeracy capabilities related to everyday living contexts that they face throughout their lives. The unique contexts of engaging students in both theoretical and practical dimensions of learning afford ample opportunities to develop written, spoken and visual literacies. For example, students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use a range of measurement techniques—weight, length, volume, area when producing food and textiles items • develop skills in estimating—quantities of ingredients, costs for producing food and textiles items • develop skills in using formulae—calculating quantities of ingredients for smaller or larger groups than intended by a recipe, adapting patterns for textile items • analyse statistical data e.g. health statistics • develop financial literacy when considering consumer decisions related to, for example, food, clothing, mobile phones • develop and interpret graphs related to surveys and dietary analysis • develop skills in reading, interpreting and comparing food labels and decoding advertising messages • develop expertise in using a range of genres such as procedures (recipes), persuasive arguments (debating contentious issues such advertising, fairtrade, use of outworkers, eco-friendly products etc.), reports (on investigations, design challenges etc.) • develop oral language skills as they ask questions, seek advice, present viewpoints and discuss their practical tasks.
Thinking skills	<p>Home economics learning experiences enable students to develop the capability to solve problems, make decisions, think critically, develop an argument, use evidence in support of that argument and critically reflect as they engage in complex challenges related to everyday living. For example, students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use empowerment, social inquiry and technology processes to make decisions and solve problems related to planning and making changes to food intake, advertising, and the impact of fashion trends and marketing on individuals and families • think critically when considering competing values, rights, responsibilities, interests and social norms about local and global issues—for example, same-sex marriages, child abuse, homelessness, food miles, sustainable food futures, fashion models and ethical issues such as fairtrade and fairwear • develop arguments and justify positions on a range of issues such as advertising junk food to children, body image and the fashion industry, unsustainable farming practices • advocate for policies and practices that are socially just and promote individual and family wellbeing • apply consumer and financial literacy skills to food and clothing choices.

	Home economics enables students to develop expert novice capabilities, that is, the ability to be good at learning in new contexts.
ICTs	<p>Home economics learning experiences enable students to develop the capacity to both manage and use information technology safely and responsibly, including the capacity to evaluate the source, reliability, accuracy and validity of information that abounds in cyberspace. They learn how to use digital technologies in academic, practical, collaborative and creative pursuits, as well as in advocacy activities. For example, students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • access and critically examine statistics from web-based health and government agencies • critically examine reports from a range of web-based sources about contentious issues in order to examine in whose interests the reports are written and who stands to gain from the reports—for example, housing in remote communities, sweat shop clothing production, reduction of meat intake • develop skills to undertake effective searches online and locate appropriate information in a timely manner • use a comprehensive web-based dietary software program, developed by Xyris Software (Australia) P/L in consultation with HEIA, to critically examine food diaries, recipes and meal plans and to create graphs and develop nutrition information panels for food products • use digital technologies to design and administer surveys related to social issues • use digital photography to represent stages in the development of products or to provide evidence of their learning • engage in digital textiles printing • use blogs to create journals to monitor progress and thinking • use wikis and other web 2.0 tools to share ideas when brainstorming design ideas or working collaboratively on a research topic • critique blogs as a source of data when doing an investigation • use cloud computing to share ideas and resources for a collaborative investigation • use online tools such as email and web 2.0 tools to communicate with their teacher, class members and experts in range of areas related to their studies • learn how to become digital citizens by using ICT in a safe and responsible manner in their classes.
Creativity	<p>Home economics learning experiences enable students to develop the capability to generate new ideas, see existing situations in new ways, identify alternative explanations, see links and find new ways to apply ideas in the context of everyday living. Students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • develop creative solutions when they apply divergent thinking to resolving design challenges—for example, designing and preparing foods that are low cost alternative to energy dense take-away food, food/meal plans that have a low ecological footprint, or creative textile items that promote their self-image • consider existing situations in new ways and identify alternative explanations when they take a social inquiry approach to controversial issues and examine the issue from alternative stances as a strategy to move forward.
Self-management	Home economics learning experiences enable students to develop the capability to take responsibility for their own work and learning, manage their learning, monitor, reflect on and evaluate learning, identify

	<p>personal characteristics that contribute to or limit effectiveness, plan and undertake work independently, take responsibility for their behaviour and performance, and learn from successes and failures. In addition to general pedagogical practice that promotes an ethos of self-management, students, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • as part of the overarching home economics practices of empowerment, social inquiry and technology practices, learn to plan, undertake and evaluate work to accomplish a design challenge • as part of these practices reflect on what they have learnt, how they have learnt and what they might do differently another time • manage the promotion of their own and others' health, for example when they analyse their own diets and set and work towards goals to improve their diets • manage their own and others' safety when working in food preparation and clothing construction areas and in an online environment.
<p>Teamwork</p>	<p>Home economics education enables student to develop the capability to work effectively and productively with others, including working in harmony with others, contributing towards common purposes, defining and accepting individual and group roles and responsibilities, respecting individual and group differences, identifying the strengths of team members and building social relationships. For example, students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • work collaboratively to support each other to bring about changes to their food habits or changes to societal practices such as advertising or non-eco-friendly food and textiles industry practices • work in teams to prepare, cook and serve food • work in socially diverse groups to solve problems and accomplish tasks • work in teams to run playgroups • work collaboratively to use a range of technological skills to complete a task such as making a movie • share with others food prepared in the home economics classroom • interact with others to collect data on and then discuss with peers social issues affecting the health and wellbeing of families, community and the wider society • plan strategies and demonstrate interpersonal skills to communicate appropriately with others about making health-enhancing food choices.
<p>Intercultural understandings</p>	<p>Home economics education provides opportunities for students to appreciate and respect their own and others' cultures, work and communicate with those from different cultures, appreciate the special place of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and respect Australia's multicultural composition. With the changing face of the Australian population, students develop these intercultural understandings when they, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • develop respect for and appreciation of their own and others' cultures by exploring family, food and clothing customs of other cultures, especially Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and those cultures in their own community or in the news • work and communicate with those from different cultures and backgrounds, especially when they are preparing and sharing food with peers in the class, often preparing food with different flavours, preparation methods and equipment

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • work and communicate with those from different cultures and backgrounds, sometimes from interstate or overseas, in an online environment to explore a range of home economics-related issues such as family life and health • develop appreciation of the special place of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures when they discuss family structures and food traditions • develop respect for Australia’s multicultural composition when they engage in investigations related to social issues in their communities • consider the impact of Australian eating and advertising patterns on migrant families • explore fashion body manipulation in other cultures—for example, foot binding, plastic surgery.
<p>Ethical behaviour</p>	<p>Home economics education enables students to engage in critique of a number of socially-unjust issues, debate, take a stand and take action on contentious issues, and consider how their ethical actions can contribute to the wellbeing of both local and global communities. They develop these ethical behaviours when they, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • engage in social critique to identify right and wrong on a range of social issues—for example, globalisation, binge drinking, food security, violence—and participate in social action to advocate for change that enhances the wellbeing of individuals and families • think, engage in debate, make judgments and take a stand about contentious and/or sensitive issues related to families (abortion, adoption by same-sex couples, euthanasia etc), fairtrade, sweat shops, caring for an ageing population, use of resources (land for grazing cattle, treatment of animals raised for food etc), genetically modified foods, farming practices (for example, battery hens), online communities (for example, ‘digital footprints’ and cyberbullying) • are encouraged to act with moral and ethical integrity and move from debate to action on ethical and moral issues—for example, food miles, fast fashion, packaging, use of natural resources such as water and fossil fuels etc • explore the impact of their own behaviours, such as consumer practices related to fashion and food, on people in developing countries and in rural communities • explore issues such as supermarket monopolies, growth of fast food outlets and cheap clothing imports.
<p>Social competence</p>	<p>Home economics education enables students to interact with others, explicitly develop personal development and communication skills, and learn how to deal with issues related to identity. They develop this social competence when they, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • interact with others in social and communal activities in practical food preparation classes, engage with the wider community when investigating social issues or prepare and serve food to visitors, and in some cases participate in running playgroups • explore and develop strategies for effective personal relationships both within families and among peers and the wider community • select textiles and fashion items that reflect their sense of self rather than media or peer expectations • interpret their own and others’ emotional states, needs and perspectives

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• examine the impact of peers and the wider community on their own identity—for example, the impact of the fashion industry and food advertising on body image and self-esteem• learn how to manage or resolve conflicts and foster inclusive and respectful interactions.
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7.0 Core content

The essential threads underpinning courses of study in home economics are:

- becoming independent
- connecting with others
- taking actions towards futures that support individual and family wellbeing, both locally and globally.

The areas of study that form the context for these essential threads are:

- individuals, families and communities
- nutrition and food
- textiles and fashion.

Design, consumer and financial literacy, sustainability, social futures and management are integrated across the areas of study. Shelter and housing are typically explored in the senior phase of learning.

The three threads and three areas of study are elaborated below.

7.1 Essential threads

Becoming independent

Students develop personal independence in preparation for a range of personal, family and community roles. They become confident and competent in making informed decisions and taking actions that enhance personal independence and wellbeing. They develop the ability to take account of personal and societal influences as they make decisions and take actions in contexts related to individuals, families and communities, nutrition and food, and textiles and fashion.

Connecting with others

Students develop an understanding of how wellbeing is influenced by connections with other people and is interdependent with the broader society. They learn positive ways to communicate, interact and live with others, prepare for diverse relationships and meet the needs of others. They come to understand how decisions made at a local level—for example, consumer decisions—impact on others in the global community.

Taking actions towards preferred futures

Students take actions to promote individual, family and community wellbeing, both locally and globally. They develop an understanding of how decisions and actions of individuals, governments, business and other organisations impact on individuals, families and communities. Through empowerment practice, social inquiry and technology practice (collectively called Home Economics Practice) students develop a sense of responsibility to take action and advocate for actions that promote preferred futures for individuals, families and communities.

7.2 Areas of study

Individuals, families and communities

With an emphasis on, but not exclusive to adolescence, students explore how humans grow and develop, both physically, socially, emotionally, intellectually and spiritually, including how identity and self-esteem are shaped and influence wellbeing. They consider how body image is formed and the consequences of positive and negative body image, and how this links to self-image and healthy minds.

Students develop understandings about relationships both within the family and outside the family, learning a number of skills that help establish and maintain relationships among peers and within families. They develop a range of interpersonal, communication and conflict resolution skills. They come to understand how diverse social, cultural and environmental factors influence relationships and self-management and shape personal development. Students develop skill in the use of both written and verbal communication.

Students explore contemporary issues and social trends related to identity, families and interpersonal relationships—for example, the impact of the digital world on relationships, youth homelessness, consumer trends, double shifts, men's and women's roles in the family and same-sex marriages.

Nutrition and food

Students learn how to make healthy food choices that take into account social, economic and cultural influences. They learn how to use food selection tools and dietary guidelines to critique and design a range of meals and meal plans that support health and minimise food-related health risks. With a focus on, but not exclusive to adolescence, they consider the macro- and micro-nutrients important for development (for example, kilojoules, saturated fat, calcium, folate, omega-3 fatty acids). The importance of food for brain development is also explored.

They design, prepare and present nutritionally balanced, aesthetically appealing and cost-appropriate foods and come to realise that a wide range of practical skills is empowering for sustainable food choices. They develop food preparation skills and techniques based on an understanding of the scientific, sensory and aesthetic properties of foods that enhance the quality of the food. They adapt recipes to maximise the nutritional value and/or cost-effectiveness of the recipe, manage resources when choosing and preparing food, and practise food safety and hygiene methods.

Students analyse and evaluate their own diets, and importantly they use empowerment processes to make health-promoting, culturally-appropriate, sustainable changes to their diets. This necessarily means that they develop the ability to think critically about the wide range of influences on food choices, including contemporary issues such as Gen Y characteristics, the fast food industry, advertising and marketing practices. They come to understand the interplay between food and all dimensions of health (physical, social, emotional and intellectual) and how the interplay among personal, social, cultural and environmental factors influences health behaviours.

Students explore issues such as inequities and sustainable food futures both locally and globally. They explore how their consumer choices related to, for example, packaging, organic farming, non-meat options, impact on their health as well as the local and global environment. They engage in social inquiry to challenge those practices that run counter to healthy lifestyles, healthy self-image, food security and food accessibility.

Textiles and fashion

Students explore design, fibres and fabrics as well as fashion marketing and the social messages of clothing. This enables them to make wise consumer decisions and choose and/or create their own designs that respect their own personalities and needs, taking into account aesthetic, design, functional, environmental and economic dimensions of their purchases.

They explore how textiles and fashion choices impact on their identity, self-esteem and body image, and how various fashion and textile industries use marketing and advertising to promote inappropriate consumption patterns in the interests of their businesses. Students engage in practical and design skills that enable them to develop their creativity in order to

enhance and embellish textile articles and to create unique pieces that make a statement about their identity.

At the same time they learn how to make ethical decisions to ensure that their decisions do not impact negatively, or encourage practices that impact negatively on others in both local, national and global communities—they consider, for example, sweat shops, fairwear, fast fashion, nanotechnology and sustainability issues—leading to socially-just, environmentally responsible choices.

They explore how innovations and emerging textile technologies are impacting on communications, social practices and health and wellbeing.

8.0 Learning and pedagogy in the home economics curriculum

Learning in home economics integrates:

- knowledge and understanding
- thinking and reasoning
- practical and creative performance

so that students can take critical and emancipatory action to enhance wellbeing and to advocate for individuals, families and communities at all levels and sectors of society.

Literacy and numeracy skills, ICT competence, thinking skills, creativity, self-management skills, teamwork, intercultural understandings, ethical behaviour and social competence are developed as students develop understandings, think, reason and engage in practical tasks that prepare them to respond positively to real-life challenges.

Quality home economics programs:

- connect with students' worlds
- use contemporary educational research to guide planning
- develop practices that are empowering, rather than isolated knowledges and skills.

8.1 Connecting with students' worlds

The real-life context and practical orientation of home economics are invaluable in connecting a wide range of students with deep and critical learning that prepares them for independence, as well as a commitment to the wellbeing of self and others. Home economics learning experiences connect with students' worlds and the real-life contexts of their families—for example, they explore fast foods, students' own dietary intakes, fast fashion, consumer textiles, conflict resolution, negotiation, digital communications and online communities. They learn how to prepare nutritious food fast and with a minimum of fuss. Issues in students' worlds are explored in a way that promotes informed and ethical citizenship, as well as personal wellbeing.

8.2 Using contemporary educational research to guide planning

Home economics pedagogy builds on research that indicates that:

- students should engage in deep learning in order to develop deep understandings, even if time constraints mean studying fewer topics to get this depth; they develop conceptual understandings and establish relatively complex connections to the central concepts, not volumes of facts that will be forgotten once 'the test' or 'the assignment' is over
- knowledge about, for example, food consumption, sun exposure, alcohol use and fashion choices is necessary but insufficient to bring about behaviour change
- promoting intellectual rigour is key to improving student outcomes
- young people are concerned with health, particularly social and emotional health, and concerned with relationships
- students need both traditional and modern communication skills—digital tools for collaboration, negotiation, research and building critical literacy skills as well as face-to-face communication skills such as negotiation, conflict resolution, discussion,

decision-making and advocacy.

8.3 Developing practices that are empowering, rather than isolated knowledges and skills

Much of home economics education is concerned with actions—actions related to becoming independent and actions related to interdependence, whether local or global. These actions are taken in a context of multiple societal influences such as technology, multiculturalism and the need for environmental sustainability. Knowledge and skills alone are inadequate to enable students to take action as informed and ethical citizens. Effective home economics education is about developing practices that are empowering—practices such as empowerment, social inquiry and technology.

Empowerment practice

Empowerment practice focuses on taking action to create positive outcomes on matters of personal or community significance that are impacted on by societal influences. For example:

- improving personal diet (positive personal outcome) in light of factors such as advertising, time and peer pressure (societal influences)
- critiquing and taking action on fashion choices in terms of the messages it conveys about the wearer
- critiquing digital environments in terms of personal safety and privacy and digital footprint creation and promoting appropriate and responsible online behaviours.

Empowerment practice involves:

- collecting, analysing and evaluating data related to the matter being investigated
- setting goals
- identifying barriers and enablers to the goals
- planning to achieve the goals, including addressing barriers and enablers
- taking action to achieve the goals
- critical reflection on actions.

Each step in empowerment practice plays a critical role in empowering students to develop a sense of control over their actions and factors that affect their actions. Where possible, learners are actively engaged in working with others to assess and, if appropriate, modify choices and practices. It is important that students understand the process so that they can re-apply it in other situations without teacher guidance.

Social inquiry

A process of social inquiry is used to engage students in critical thinking about, and taking action on, taken-for-granted assumptions in society that manifest themselves in the perpetuation of inequality and injustice. A process of social inquiry developed for home economics education (Home Economics Institute of Australia Inc., 2001) involves:

- discussion and initial reaction to practices/beliefs
- exploration of the practices/beliefs—What is happening?
- Critical evaluation to identify issues of ethics and justice—Should it be happening?
- identification and clarification of the issue.

Possible contexts for social inquiry include the following:

- Food choices that use excessive 'food miles'
- Food packaging that has negative impacts on the environment
- Images in fashion magazines that may lead to poor self-esteem and/or unhealthy eating habits in a desire to become thin
- Advertising during children's peak viewing time that may promote poor food habits among children
- Toys that promote gendered roles
- Men's participation in family roles
- Family norms portrayed on television or other media.

Technology practice

Technology processes are used to meet challenges designed to promote health and wellbeing. Home economics education promotes an approach where this technology process is an iterative process, with activity moving back and forth through the process and not as a series of steps or stages progressing in a linear fashion. Having developed processes and/or products that promote wellbeing, students are encouraged to promote use of these products.

When students apply the technology process to design/create technologies they consider the beliefs and values of both the developer of the technology and the user of the technology—for example, the aesthetic, social, environmental, cultural and economic values and beliefs. The following illustrate some possible home economics learning experiences:

- Using a range of information communication technologies to illustrate the impact of television on how families function
- Developing, testing, evaluating and justifying a range of food products to meet pre-determined family needs
- Investigating, devising and evaluating an interactive web-based article targeting a teenage audience, entitled 'Living with ...' (students to decide—for example, parents, grandma).
- Developing, testing, evaluating and justifying a range of recycled and rebadged fashion items that reflect their personality.

Conclusion

There is clearly a need for home economics education in the 21st century. HEIA urges ACARA to develop national guidelines for home economics education in Years 7–10. Extensive consultation with the profession has provided overwhelming support for this position. This consultation has evidenced a powerful commitment to a futures-driven home economics curriculum that maximises opportunities and provides skills to prepare students for living in the 21st century. Home economics education offers a unique context of bringing together transdisciplinary theoretical and practical learning. It builds capacity for students to become active and informed members of society who are empowered to design their social futures, contribute to the wellbeing of themselves and others, and to examine and take action on matters of personal, community and global significance.

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