

○ COALITION OF THE UNCERTAIN

CLASSROOM RESPONSES TO DEBATES ABOUT HISTORY TEACHING

Anna Clark

Dr Clark is currently the Australian Postdoctoral Fellow in the Faculty of Education, Monash University. With Stuart Macintyre, she wrote the History Wars in 2003, and last year published Convicted!, a history book for children. Her latest book, Teaching the Nation, was published by Melbourne University Press in 2006 and examines debates about teaching Australian history in schools.

Correspondence to Anna Clark: anna.clark@education.monash.edu.au

Concern over the state of Australian history education has generated heated debate for over a year. Yet there have been glaringly absent voices in this very public argument: namely, the students and teachers who engage with this subject every day. Despite mounting anxiety about the state of Australian history teaching, there has been little discussion of how history teachers and students *do* history. This paper asks how students, teachers and curriculum officials make sense of a subject that constantly arouses so much public anxiety and unease. This article has been peer-reviewed.

INTRODUCTION

There is a widely held belief in Australia that there are certain things children need to know about their country, and it is the nation's responsibility to see they are taught. This view is illustrated by Prime Minister Howard's speech on the eve of Australia Day in 2006, and the many Australians who supported it. It holds that history forms a critical element of core national knowledge, and without it young Australians will be endangered by their own ignorance. As Howard warned in his speech, 'young people are at risk of being disinherited from their community if that community lacks the courage and confidence to teach its history' (Howard 2006). His concern is shared by many, who worry that, without teaching a confident national narrative to 'our children', we are at risk of becoming nationally *illiterate*.

It is odd that public interest in Australian history teaching seems inversely proportional to its popularity in the classroom: there has been widespread concern from historians, educationists and politicians, as well as from the public, that school students are not learning enough about their history, and that the little that they do learn is *ad hoc* and uncoordinated. Howard's speech reanimated public anxiety about history education, and generated significant media coverage and popular support that is still prominent a year on. Meanwhile, the subject continues to be something of an anathema for many schoolchildren – as one year 12 student from Darwin said to me in an interview in 2006, she would rather learn any history than her own nation's: 'I remember doing it heaps in primary school and it was really boring, and it still is, and Australian history just makes me want to cry. It's so boring and I can't stand it.'¹

So what does this anxious debate actually mean for Australian schools? How do history teachers, students and curriculum officials see themselves in this public discussion of the past? And, most importantly, can such discussion make Australian history a stronger subject? This paper compares recent public contests over history teaching with professional discussion of the discipline, and notes a mounting pedagogical tension between the two. Emanating from the public debate seems to be an insistence on teaching a single historical narrative that emphasises

content and is nationally oriented. The professional discussion, however, has been markedly different. Many historians, educators, and students agree that Australian history education needs to be strengthened and supported in schools, but that any efforts to do so must not diminish the subject's complexity and appeal.

Drawing on material from a large qualitative research project into the current state of history teaching and curriculum development across Australia, this paper reorients the debate back to the very people who engage with the subject in classrooms around the country every day. It is clear that (with the possible exception of NSW) Australian history teaching is largely unsystematic – there are countless history ‘horror stories’ of endless repetition, unstimulating material and a lack of coherent knowledge about Australia’s past (Halse et al. 1997; Taylor 2006; Taylor and Clark 2006). Yet it is also clear, in talking with teachers, students and curriculum designers, that they do not see the answer coming in the form of a mandated, content-driven national history curriculum. In fact, what teachers and students offer with surprising clarity and articulation is a belief in teaching and learning Australian history in all its complexity: they do not want history syllabuses and textbooks that are heavy on facts and light on analysis; and they do not want to learn a simple version of the nation’s past. Ultimately, I argue that unless their views are included in the public debate over the past, the political and popular momentum for greater historical content and national focus may further diminish the popularity of the subject.

CORE NATIONAL KNOWLEDGE AND ‘HISTORICAL LITERACY’

‘Too often history has fallen victim in an ever more crowded curriculum to subjects deemed more relevant to today’, the Prime Minister told the National Press Club in January 2006. ‘And too often, history, along with other subjects in the humanities, has succumbed to a postmodern culture of relativism where any objective record of achievement is questioned or repudiated’ (Howard 2006). His reading of the subject was no isolated opinion. Howard’s proposal ‘to enlist a coalition of the willing... to bring about a change in attitudes’ to Australian history received significant political and popular support. In *The Australian* Janet Albrechtson was inspired by his speech to investigate an Australian history textbook for herself: ‘And, there, in chapter nine, under the heading of *Australia 1788–1900: Colonisation and Contact* are more than 30 pages devoted to the politics of shame’, she reported. ‘So this is what all the fuss is about... This is history pressed into the service of progressive politics, imbuing students with political agendas, rather than encouraging genuine learning’ (Albrechtson 2006).

With similarly characteristic conviction, the Victorian educationist Kevin Donnelly asked, ‘Was John Howard correct this week? Has the teaching of history fallen victim to a politically correct, New Age approach to curriculum, and are students receiving a fragmented understanding of the past? The evidence suggests “yes”’ (Donnelly 2006). Letters to the major daily newspapers also revealed a widespread public perception that this nationally important discipline was badly damaged. Grattan Wheaton wrote to the Adelaide *Advertiser* and agreed ‘with everything Mr Howard said about the teaching of history/geography subjects in schools’ (Wheaton 2006). Anne-Marie Irwin wrote in to *The Australian*:

I congratulate John Howard for his Australia Day speech. I believe we are fortunate to have a Prime Minister who is a true statesman, and not merely a politician. His thoughts regarding the teaching of the humanities and of the

need to present a coherent picture to the rising generations in this period of postmodern deconstructionism will strike a chord in the hearts and minds of many teachers (Irwin 2006).

By contrast, several teachers and historians worried that Howard's 'coalition of the willing' would come at the expense of critical engagement and historical inquiry. The professional services manager of the History Teachers' Association of Victoria, Annabel Astbury, argued in an article for the *Age* that 'Informed citizens are ones who look at all sides of the picture and come to conclusions themselves rather than accept a celebrated version of events. I am certain that Mr Howard would not have future "informed" citizens' knowledge limited by such a closed canon' (Astbury 2006). Speaking on the *7.30 Report*, the historian Stuart Macintyre agreed that 'we need to do more to restore history, but we need to make sure that that is open to diverse viewpoints and that it is not simply an exercise in indoctrination'.² Members of the public echoed some of this professional concern. Melissa Cowgill wrote in to the *Australian* and asked, 'What is so wrong with high school students learning that there are different versions of the truth and history? Why shouldn't they learn to question and challenge facts? This is what makes truly active and informed citizens' (Cowgill 2006).

Such views gave qualified support to Howard's history push. They agreed with the need for a renewal and revival of Australian history in schools, so long as it did not come at the expense of critical engagement with the subject; any attempt to strengthen Australian history had to take into account the demands of the discipline and the realities of the classroom. As one teacher I interviewed in Tasmania a few months after Howard's speech admitted, 'Oh look, you read in the paper all the time about the history the kids should know and I keep thinking, "right, come into a classroom and teach it". It doesn't work.' She went on to articulate the dilemma faced by many history teachers struggling to balance the need to transmit knowledge and encourage student interest and engagement:

I think one of my problems with history teaching all over is how you select what is the most important. How you prioritise... is not only something that you've got to work out but it relates to the group that you're teaching. And that's where the complexity is I think. So I think our nation is extremely important but I think there are different ways to come at it.³

In other words, we may all want students to 'know' certain aspects of Australia's history, but how does this knowledge get taught in an engaging and meaningful way?

Such comments are characteristic of a number of interviews I have conducted as part of a collaborative research project on history education. The project aims to clarify historical understandings from departments of education down to the classroom to consider how the nation's story is conceived at all levels of the curriculum process – at a time when the subject seems more contested than ever. About 250 students, teachers and curriculum officials from around Australia have been interviewed as part of this research. The interviews are qualitative oral histories that ask participants to identify aspects of Australian history they may have studied (or taught), and the sorts of teaching and historical methods they best engage with.⁴

The material from these interviews does not challenge the overwhelming public desire to see a stronger history presence in schools, but does question conventional emphases on how that might be achieved. While much of the popular support for the government's history revival lies in a belief in the primacy of facts contained in a single national narrative, these views from the classroom demand a very different sort of historical understanding. A teacher from a government school on the NSW Central Coast described it as history's 'critical dimension': 'I think it's a really liberating, empowering subject to teach,' he said, 'and students I believe walk out of my classrooms feeling more empowered than they do out of other subjects. It's the idea of knowing it's okay to think critically.'⁵

History educationists such as Tony Taylor and Carmel Young have suggested this critical dimension is a key element of 'historical literacy', a comprehension of the subject beyond simply knowing what happened: 'The public discussion about school history should focus more on understanding that history education is about the development of "historical literacy" rather than a simplistic notion that history is about the recall of historical facts or, at best, an entertaining story' (Taylor & Young 2003). Knowledge of the past is an essential component of historical literacy, they maintain, but so too is the ability to understand multiple perspectives, develop research skills and form arguments. This form of historical literacy goes much further than the push to develop national knowledge that many advocate for school history, and it is strongly represented in the professional discussion of the subject. As such, while pressure to define the 'nation's story' is a difficult task for governments, educationists, historians and parents alike, without any real consideration of the views of curriculum designers, teachers and students debate over the subject remains severely restricted.

VIEW FROM THE SUMMIT

A few months after his Australia Day speech, Howard's call to arms was taken up by the federal Education Minister Julie Bishop, who urged a 'renaissance' in Australian history teaching, and warned that the subject was indeed under threat. 'Not enough students are learning Australian history', she said, 'and there is too much political bias and not enough pivotal facts and dates being taught' (Bishop 2006). Worried about the lack of coherence and coordination in history teaching and curriculum development around the country, Bishop commissioned a history summit of leading historians, educationists and public commentators to develop a national approach to the subject.⁶ 'By the time students finish their secondary schooling, they must have a thorough understanding of their nation's past', she said.

On the day the summit was due to meet the *Australian's* editorial welcomed the prospect of a stronger Australian history curriculum, and urged immediate change: 'for too long Australian history, when it is taught at all, has been used as an excuse to indoctrinate students in politically correct fads rather than give them a solid grounding in the factual and narrative history of their nation'.⁷ That day, the summit reported on current history curricula from around Australia and agreed on the need for a more coordinated national approach to the subject. Yet its decision to use overarching historical questions as an initial framework for subsequent curriculum development disappointed those who felt such an approach weakened the essential narrative of Australian history. Gregory Melleuish, who had designed an Australian history curriculum for the summit, felt that participants 'who did not believe in narrative history but in the social studies approach

to history' had dominated, and that their coalition was 'the greatest tragedy of the summit' (Melleuish 2006).

It is difficult to tease out the politics from the pedagogy in the summit's organisation and the response it generated: being strong on history teaching is undoubtedly a popular political strategy. Meanwhile, a belief in 'the facts', and that the nation can *and should* be strengthened by teaching a single national narrative in schools is deeply held by many Australians. It may indeed be a truism, but the nation's history is inseparable from its politics and identity – and national history teaching is even more so, because it goes to the heart of how we pass on 'our history' to 'our children' (Clark 2006). While the issue of whether pedagogical principles can be untangled from political ideology probably justifies a paper in its own right, it is the tension between public expectations about history teaching on the one hand, and historical perspectives from the classroom on the other, that is my immediate interest here.

Julie Bishop had clearly explained her reasons for the summit's inception and the sort of history she felt Australian children should be learning:

Every schoolchild should know, for example, when and why the then Lieutenant James Cook sailed along the east coast of Australia. Every child should know why the British transported convicts to Australia and who Australia's first prime minister was. They should also know how and why Federation came about, and why we were involved in the two world wars (Bishop 2006).

Such an approach, Bishop considered, would surely remedy the disjointed and biased history that she felt was pervading current curricula.

A large degree of this concern about the state of young Australians' historical knowledge has been justified by surveys that reveal a widespread ignorance of the very heritage they are about to inherit. Prominent reports in the mid-1990s by the Civics Expert Group and the Sydney educationist Murray Print showed alarmingly low comprehension levels of Australia's political processes and its political history. Such research warned the lack of national literacy among Australia's young people could threaten the state of civic public life. Print even contended that 'Students in our schools simply don't possess acceptable levels of political knowledge and understanding to become effective citizens' (Print 1995: 3, 13, 39–40; Civics Expert Group 1994).

In the lead up to the 2001 centenary of federation, further revelations were made about young Australians' lack of historical and political understanding. As the centenary approached various surveys showed that more Australians knew the Presidents of the United States than Australia's own leaders, or that only 36 per cent of respondents could identify Edmund Barton as an Australian politician.⁸ Most recently, a 2006 report prepared for the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs by the Australian Council of Education Research revealed that the vast majority of Australian teenagers did not know Australia Day commemorated the arrival of the First Fleet, and most were also ignorant of the reason for Anzac Day (Ferrari 2006).

As the American history educationist Sam Wineburg (2000) has rightly claimed, these surveys – and the subsequent dismay that always follows them – have become a predictable feature of public life: 'The whole world has turned upside down in the past eighty years but one thing has seemingly remained the same: Kids don't know history' (306–307). Nevertheless, the perception

that the future of the nation is dependent on teaching its past drives much of the debate over history education in Australia (and around the world) – and the collective public response to children’s apparent ignorance is invariably to ‘give them more facts’.

Others, by contrast, wonder whether knowing the nation’s first prime minister *is* all that history comprises. In the summit wash-up, Daniel Berk wrote in to *The Australian* and was pleased to see the ‘federal Government emphasising the importance of history in the school curriculum’, but wondered ‘What are facts in the context of a history lesson?’:

Certainly, it’s a fact that Federation occurred in 1901, but are the reasons behind this historic event ‘facts’ or opinions? That event was the product of a whole host of different opinions that motivated people to behave and interact in various ways, with Federation as the end result (Berk 2006).

Some students I have spoken with are also not so sure about the innate value of learning facts isolated from any historical context or analysis. A year 11 student from Brisbane who recalled the centenary of federation celebrations thought there should be more to the subject than just being able to remember Edmund Barton. ‘Like, I know the name of the first prime minister,’ she admitted, ‘but that’s the only prime minister I really know, Edmund Barton, and I don’t know anything about him, I just know his name. And I don’t know anything about any of the other prime ministers’.⁹

To be sure, a number of commentators doubt whether history-as-fact can constitute a learning experience with any great depth. The Canadian historian Desmond Morton (2006) recently wondered whether such ‘factoids’ could encompass history’s complexity: ‘is knowing that Confederation happened in 1867 or the Winnipeg General Strike in 1919 “history” or simply an almost meaningless fragment of an event, a “factoid” as easily forgotten as memorized?’ (26). Like Taylor and Young’s taxonomy of historical literacy, the Canadian history educationist Peter Seixas has also been developing a set of ‘benchmarks’ for history teaching and has similarly insisted on setting higher standards: ‘When I say “higher standards”, I do not simply mean that students need to know more facts, or get more of them right’, he considered. ‘Rather, we need to acknowledge that contention over the meanings of the past is an ongoing feature of contemporary culture, and that it might even be constructive if citizens had ways to participate knowledgeably and thoughtfully’ (Seixas 2006: 14).

In Australia, too, historians have insisted on teaching the richness of history in school education. Graeme Davison recently argued that history’s worth in a liberal democracy depends on its capacity to develop critical thinking: ‘We cannot inculcate democratic values in the polity unless we encourage critical and independent judgement in the classroom’ (Davison 2006: 7). Penny Russell from the University of Sydney was just as clear about the sort of history that should be taught in schools: ‘If the end result was to be a community with a more open understanding of the complex story of Australia’s past, I would rejoice’ (Fullagar 2006: 3). And in an interview the day after the summit, one Canberra teacher was similarly critical of any emphasis to teach ‘the facts’ alone:

What we don’t want is a grand narrative and what we don’t want is a chronological, fact-driven syllabus. We want a syllabus, a curriculum, which opens

kids up to the problems and the breadth of history. We don't want them following a single train track towards a predetermined end.¹⁰

It is not only teachers who have expressed anxiety about any possible return to 'the facts' of Australian history. Terry Woolley, the Executive Director of Primary, Middle and Senior Secondary Services in South Australia, also argued that students should be exposed to history 'in the context of "this is what it was like then, what does it mean for us now?" There is huge value in that debate, but [simply] learning a set of facts like that is really silly'.¹¹ While knowledge of historical facts and events is a critical component of historical literacy, it should not be an end in itself. These ideas have been repeated time and again in my interviews around the country, but it is worrying that the views of professional historians, educators, and students have not had greater currency in the public debate over the state of Australian history in schools. And if the debate continues to be conducted without them, there is a serious risk students will become further alienated from the subject.

HISTORY IN THE CLASSROOM

One of the most telling results from this research to date has been the number of participating students who advocate learning a more complex national story in their classes. These students are in a distinct majority, and have stated with surprising clarity that being exposed to this level of historical understanding makes the subject more interesting and relevant for them. Responding to the question 'How do you learn history best?', for example, a year twelve class from a public school in suburban Melbourne said:

Tony: Debate in class helps a lot. Because some people might actually bring something up that might not have come up before.

Michelle: I guess class discussion, where our teacher will put up a question on the board that everyone has to answer in a paragraph, and then she'll say 'who wants to say something', and you'll get a lot of people put something in so you get a lot of different perspectives.

Mal: Anything that shows two perspectives.¹²

These students are more than capable of dealing with multiple perspectives. In fact, they suggest, that is how they learn history best.

Far from being taught simply core facts, these year twelve students from a public school in Darwin also wanted to learn through discussion and debate:

Natalie: We did a lot of debating last year, like arguing our different sides, and I think one of the really big components is having good teachers. I think what made that so interesting was that we had really good teachers who know their stuff and have like actively engaged us and they've questioned our opinions, and it's just been a really good experience.

Gabby: I think on the whole, I don't want to speak for everyone in our history class, but I get the feeling that we all *learn* better through the discussions...

Through being able to ask those questions and that sort of thing, rather than just reading dates out of a textbook. Although that is helpful in some instances, I think as a whole a lot of our learning has been through discussion.

Natalie: Because it's engaging your mind, and through talking about it you learn more and it sticks in your brain more because you've actually tried to think about it, and actively.¹³

On the other hand, students find it most difficult to engage with their history when the topic is perceived to be solely content-driven or overly dry. When asked whether they enjoyed learning history, students from a year 10 class in a small town in South Eastern Tasmania had clear ideas about what worked for them.

Alicia: It depends what teacher you're getting.

Karen: Some teachers just dictate it to you and some teachers take you through it. The teacher's important. I mean if the teacher just stands there and mumbles half an encyclopedia out to you, it's just going to go in one ear and out, and you're going to be half asleep on the table.¹⁴

One year 12 student from a public school in Perth felt there was too much emphasis on learning facts and dates at his school. 'Well, there is a slight overemphasis on the textbook', he said. 'I mean, it's important, but there are more opportunities for debate and actual evaluation outside of assessment.'¹⁵

Curriculum officials constantly have to balance this need for teaching national history with maintaining student engagement in the subject. Julie Fisher, the Principal Education Officer for Studies of Society and Environment in the Tasmanian Department of Education, agreed that 'we should be teaching Australian History and I don't think there's any problem with that'.¹⁶ But she insisted that students need to be 'actively invited and participating and not just passive' in their learning. Terry Woolley was similarly concerned to advocate a more complex approach to Australian history:

And when you ask should Australian history be compulsory? The answer is yes, but just whose history are we talking about? Is it John Howard's view of history? Is it my view of history? Is it your own? And who decides that? So straight away you are into question of what history is being taught.¹⁷

Students are not ignorant of this dilemma that characterises Australian history: those interviewed overwhelmingly think that Australian history is important to know, but they are not so sure how to make it interesting. A year 12 student from Brisbane said that Australian history should be compulsory, but if it is 'it shouldn't be inward-looking like America, and I think it should be the whole investigative sort of history. I don't like the idea of just learning facts, and then being told what to think'.¹⁸ These comments from senior students at an independent boys school on the outer suburbs of Perth also encapsulate the dilemma faced by many students studying Australian history:

Robert: I feel like in history Australian history is relevant but I get the feeling that all through high school there's this massive push to be a patriot and to be involved and to understand about Australia. But I think it's one of the most *boring* countries in the world, and I'd rather learn about America or China or something like that.

Jeff: At least America had the civil war.

Anthony: Federation is a boring topic to learn about, but it is important as Australians to learn about it, because they're making immigrants who migrate over from other countries learn about it, so the least we could do is learn it as well, you know.¹⁹

Teachers are astutely aware of this problem of teaching Australian history. One teacher who worked at a small country school in Tasmania was not sure how to make a topic like federation seem relevant and appealing to her students:

No, I don't think federation is one of the ones that really, a topic that would really grab them. Possibly if they did, they'd do it from the local perspective. Like what did the saw millers, the loggers and the fishermen and the berry pickers and the farmers think about federation, and what did it mean to them in 1901 without iPods and faxes? We'd probably look at it that way rather than reasons for federation, reasons against, famous people in federation. It would be a completely different way of looking at federation. I mean obviously it's extremely important to all Australians and it is an interesting story, but how do you connect a kid with that?²⁰

These responses all reflect the difficulty of teaching national history in school, and how to engage students with that history. Namely, should textbooks and syllabuses emphasise important aspects of Australia's past? Are we in danger of producing a historically illiterate nation if we do not? To be sure, a number of teachers and students have keenly expressed the importance of this factual knowledge. A history teacher from an independent school in Hobart felt it was critical to teach the topic of federation, for example, whether or not it was enjoyed by the students: 'For me I personally think it's essential that they know about the constitution and our government structure and how it came about'.²¹ Another history teacher from a Melbourne public school agreed that Australian history ought to be mandatory: 'I certainly think it should be a compulsory subject because I think, you know, I think it's really sad that you may have a whole generation of kids who don't know we were fighting the Japanese in World War II'.²²

Students, too, have expressed concern about the need for historical content in their schooling. While most talk about enjoying a variety of teaching approaches, the importance of learning historical facts has also been emphasised. Lianne, a year 12 student attending a government school in outer Melbourne, said that she was worried about her lack of historical knowledge as she was on verge of finishing school: 'I think something they should probably cover – it's not very interesting, but they should probably cover it – is the prime ministers. Because I wouldn't

have a clue what was the first prime minister, or any of them. Menzies is like the only one, and Curtin, oh, and Howard (of course!).²³

Facts and dates are not the problem here, for they are a key element of historical understanding. They provide context and coverage, and they give students and teachers a way to construct narratives and make meaning from the past, but they must not be confused with ‘history’ itself. As such, any discussion of national literacy should encompass a complex and substantial *historical literacy*, rather than a narrow fixation on core national knowledge. The desire for a greater emphasis on historical content and a more nationally affirming narrative in schools seems to be fundamentally challenged by the opinions of teachers and students, who do not doubt the critical importance of teaching Australian history, but ask that it be debated with the classroom in mind.

CONCLUSION

These responses from the history ‘frontline’ reveal how students, teachers and curriculum officials grapple with the implications of different teaching approaches and emphases in Australian history. Teachers and curriculum designers share a belief in Australian history’s importance, but they also know that teaching a narrow form of historical knowledge risks turning students off the subject. Similarly, students clearly identify the importance of learning their nation’s history, yet they realise they will not be interested in a dry recounting of important events. In other words, they understand the sense of national literacy that Howard and others call for. Indeed, they share the collective public concern about the national value of teaching Australia’s history, but ask that it be taught well. The next task is to see that their thoughts actually contribute to the public dispute over Australia’s past. At the heart of my argument is an implicit desire to change the tenor of debate from a contest over ‘what should our children know?’ to a willingness to consider their thoughts on the subject. There is indeed a national utility in history education, but in order to encourage students’ engagement with their past the ways they learn history and think about their nation need to be listened to and considered.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Interview with ‘Natalie’, public high school, Darwin, 21 June 2006 (notes in possession of author). Interviews for this paper have been conducted as part of a large research project based at Monash University and funded by the Australian Research Council. Curriculum officials who were interviewed agreed to be identified in this research, however the names of teachers and students have been changed.
- ² *7.30 Report*, Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 26 January 2006.
- ³ Interview with ‘Margaret’, public high school, Hobart, 4 May 2006 (notes in possession of author).
- ⁴ The investigators are Tony Taylor and Anna Clark from Monash University, Stuart Macintyre from the University of Melbourne, and Carmel Young from the University of Sydney. The project began in September 2005 and is due to finish in 2008. (About 80 students, teachers and curriculum designers have also been interviewed in Canada as a comparative study.)
- ⁵ Interview with ‘Brian’, public high school, Central Coast NSW, 22 August 2006 (notes in possession of author).
- ⁶ The participants at the Summit were: Andrew Barnett, Geoffrey Blainey, Geoffrey Bolton, David Boon, Bob Carr, Inga Clendinnen, Kate Darian-Smith, Nick Ewbank, John Gascoigne, Jenny Gregory, Gerard Henderson, John Hirst, Jackie Huggins, Paul Kelly, Jennifer Lawless, Mark Lopey, Gregory

- Melleuish, Margo Neale, Geoffrey Partington, Lisa Paul, Peter Stanley, Tom Stannage and Tony Taylor.
- 7 'Editorial'. 2006. *The Australian*, 17 August: 11.
- 8 'Students ignorant of history'. 2000. *Courier Mail*, 16 October: 5.
- 9 Interview with 'Miranda', public high school, Brisbane, 25 July 2006 (notes in possession of author).
- 10 Interview with 'Neil', senior secondary college, Canberra, 18 August 2006 (notes in possession of author).
- 11 Interview with Terry Woolley, Department of Education and Children's Services, Adelaide, 15 June 2006 (notes in possession of author).
- 12 Interview with students, public high school, Melbourne, 30 March 2006 (notes in possession of author).
- 13 Interview with students, public high school, Darwin, 21 June 2006 (notes in possession of author).
- 14 Interview with students, public high school, South Eastern Tasmania, 4 May 2006 (notes in possession of author).
- 15 Interview with 'Maddison', senior high school, Perth, 24 May 2006 (notes in possession of author).
- 16 Interview with Julie Fisher, School Education Division, Hobart, 5 May 2006 (notes in possession of author).
- 17 Interview with Woolley.
- 18 Interview with 'Brendan', Catholic boys school, Brisbane, 25 July 2006 (notes in possession of author).
- 19 Interview with students, Catholic boys school, Perth, 23 May 2006 (notes in possession of author).
- 20 Interview with 'Gail', public high school, South Eastern Tasmania, 4 May 2006 (notes in possession of author).
- 21 Interview with 'Andrew', independent high school, Hobart, 3 May 2006 (notes in possession of author).
- 22 Interview with 'Marco', public high school, Melbourne, 16 May 2006 (notes in possession of author).
- 23 Interview with 'Lianne', public high school, Melbourne, 16 May 2006 (notes in possession of author).

REFERENCES

- Albrechtson, Janet. 2006. 'Textbook case of making our past a blame game'. *The Australian*, 1 February: 14.
- Astbury, Annabel. 2006. 'A lesson in history'. *The Age*, 6 February: 16.
- Berk, Daniel. 2006. Letter. *The Australian*, 19 August: 18.
- Bishop, Julie. 2006. 'Our classrooms need to make a date with the facts'. *The Australian*, 6 July: 12.
- Clark, Anna. 2006. *Teaching the Nation: Politics and Pedagogy in Australian History*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press.
- Civics Expert Group. 1994. *Whereas the People... Civics and Citizenship education*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia.
- Cowgill, Melissa. 2006. Letter. *The Australian*, 27 January: 13.
- Davison, Graeme. 2006. 'The new politics of school history'. *Symposium* 34 (October): 7.
- Donnelly, Kevin. 2006. 'Why our greatest story is just not being told'. *The Australian*, 28 January: 24.
- Ferrari, Justine. 2006. 'Students ignorant of our history'. *The Australian*, 27 November: 1.
- Fullagar, Kate. 2006. 'What is wrong with Australian history?' *Symposium* 34 (October): 3.
- Halse, Christine et al. 1997. *The State of History in New South Wales*. Sydney: History Teachers' Association of New South Wales.
- Howard, John. 2006. 'Prime Minister John Howard's address to the National Press Club on January 25, 2006'. In *The Age*. [Accessed 31 January 2006.] Available from:

<http://theage.com.au/news/national/pms-speech/2006/01/25/1138066849045.html?page=fullpage#contentSwap1>.

- Irwin, Anne-Marie. 2006. Letter. *The Australian*, 27 January: 13.
- Melleuish, Gregory. 2006. Letter. *The Australian*, 25 August: 15.
- Morton, Desmond. 2006. 'Canadian History Teaching in Canada: What the Big Deal?' In *To the Past: History Education, Public Memory, and Citizenship in Canada*, edited by Sandwell, Ruth. Toronto: University of Toronto Press: 26.
- Print, Murray. 1995. *Political Understanding and Attitudes of Secondary Students*. Canberra: Parliamentary Education Office.
- Seixas, Peter. 2006. 'What is Historical Consciousness?'. In *To the Past: History Education, Public Memory, and Citizenship in Canada*, edited by Sandwell, Ruth. Toronto: University of Toronto Press: 14.
- Taylor, Tony. 2006. *Future of the Past – Final Report of the National Inquiry into School History*. Canberra: Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs.
- Taylor, Tony; Clark, Anna. 2006. 'An Overview of the Teaching and Learning of Australian History'. Department of Education and Training, Canberra.
- Taylor, Tony; Young, Carmel. 2003. *Making History: A Guide for the Teaching and Learning of History in Australian Schools*, Department of Education, Science and Training. [Accessed 5 July 2006.] Available from: <http://www.hyperhistory.org/images/assets/pdf/complete.pdf>.
- Wheaton, Grattan. 2006. Letter. *The Advertiser*, 27 January: 17.
- Wineburg, Sam. 2000. 'Making Historical Sense'. In *Knowing, Teaching and Learning History: National and International Perspectives*, edited by Stearns, Peter; Seixas, Peter and Wineburg, Sam. New York and London: New York University Press: 306–307.

Cite this article as: Clark, Anna. 2007. 'Coalition of the uncertain: Classroom responses to debates about history teaching'. *History Australia* 4 (1): pp. 12.1 to 12.12. DOI: 10.2104/ha070012.