


Video Education Australasia, (1999b). ‘Should Australia be a Republic?’. Bendigo: VEA.


APPENDIX 1:

PLAIN LANGUAGE STATEMENT FOR RESEARCH SUBJECTS
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This study is a component of the research being undertaken for a PhD thesis at the University of Melbourne within the Department of Education Policy and Management.

The primary Research Question of the thesis is:

What is the nature of Australia’s civics and citizenship deficit, and what role can school education play in addressing it?

A series of supplementary questions emerge from this major theme. These relate to the following matters:

• The Nature of Citizenship
• Citizenship and Nation
• The Politics of Citizenship
• Civic Knowledge and Civic Participation
• Citizenship and Democracy

These issues form the basis of the thesis. The thesis aims to undertake a critical analysis of current policy and, to some extent, current practice.

Much of the research will involve policy analysis, and critical self-reflection. However, as a complementary activity I wish to interview a range of leaders within the field involved in the increased attention being directed at civics and citizenship education in Australia. The interviewees are eminent participants in the field under investigation. They have been identified through their prominent contribution to the literature, policy and practice of civics and citizenship education in Australia.

The purpose of the interviews is to present a range of questions and propositions to these leaders, and seek their responses in a semi-structured manner. Subjects will be under no obligation to respond to any issues raised by the Investigator, and are free to raise matters they feel qualified to comment on. The interviews will be conducted at a place and time most convenient to the subjects.

Prior to the interviews taking place, each interviewee will be sent an Interview Schedule containing a series of questions indicative of the issues under consideration. Due to the differences in interest and expertise of the interviewees, it can be expected that some variation in style and content of each interview will occur.
The method and purpose of identifying each interviewee has clear implications for maintaining anonymity. Anonymity is not expected as subjects have been selected due to their prominence in the field, and their views are sought as a means of augmenting the public analysis of this important, emerging area of the national curriculum.

The following factors are presented to assist in reaching your decision as to whether you wish to participate in this research:

- You are under no obligation to participate in the research, and in the event of accepting this invitation, you are free to withdraw your consent at any time. You are also free to withdraw any unprocessed data previously provided.

- If you do accept the invitation to participate, you will receive a copy of indicative questions to be addressed in the interview several days in advance of the interview taking place.

- It is expected the interview will take approximately 45 minutes to complete. I will audio-tape the interview with your approval.

- You will be provided with a transcript of the interview for verification.

- The data collected as a result of the interviews will be analysed. It will be used to augment findings from other research being conducted.

- Staff and students of the University of Melbourne who may be involved as participants in the research are advised the project has received clearance by the Human Research Ethics Committee.

- Contact details all the Principal Investigators are:

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APPENDIX 2:

CONSENT FORM FOR PERSONS PARTICIPATING IN RESEARCH PROJECTS
THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE
Department of Education Policy and Management
Consent Form for Persons Participating in Research Projects

Name of Participant: ________________________________

Project Title: A critical analysis of civics and citizenship education in Australian secondary schools.

Name of Investigators: Dr David Beckett (Principal Investigator)
Dr Denise Meredyth
Mr Rod Wise

1. I consent to participate in the above project, the purposes and procedures of which have been explained to me.

2. I acknowledge that:

(a) The possible effects of the procedures have been explained to my satisfaction.

(b) I have been informed that I am free to withdraw from the project up to the point of completion and to withdraw any unprocessed data previously supplied.

(c) The project is for the purpose of research.

(d) I have been informed that confidentiality of the information I provide will be safeguarded subject to any legal requirements. That is:

- The principal investigator will be responsible for the security of the data.
- The data will be kept in locked facilities in the Department throughout the conduct of the project.
- The data will be kept for a minimum of five years from the date of publication of the research.
- No other persons will have access to the unprocessed data.
- The principal investigator will dispose of the unprocessed data at the end of five years.

(e) Due to my prominence in the field, and that I have been identified as an expert participant with a substantial record of published literature, issues of anonymity are not applicable to this project.

Signature: ________________________________ Date: __________________

Signature: ________________________________ Date: __________________
APPENDIX 3:

SAMPLE TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW: SUE FERGUSON
INTERVIEW 2 – Sue Ferguson and Rod Wise – May 2000

R.W: What do you see as the major factors behind the revival in civics and citizenship education in Australia?

S.F: Yes. Look. I’m probably not the best person to ask that because I came on the scene, sort of, afterwards. But, I guess, there is, from my dealings with, you know, Kemp and the Civics Education Group, there, he has particularly been concerned at the lack of knowledge of kids about our system. And I think underlying that is a lack of Australian pride, a concern about a lack of Australia’s pride in our democratic system or whatever. So that, and if you read the, you know, Keating initial speech that, sort of, started it off and then the Civics Education Group, no, Civics Expert Group, that seems to be coming through all the time. So it’s seeing ourselves as a nation, being proud of what we did, and, and being concerned that if kids are going to operate within this system they need to actually understand it.

R.W: OK, so that knowledge deficit is an important factor?

S.F: Well, both the knowledge base and the interest. I think, too, I think it was a need to, a concern that young kids were becoming disaffected and negative and dropping out of the system. And, seeing that, maybe, civics was a way of, you know, it is something an Australian should be proud of, we’ve done lots of things before the rest of the world. We actually have a fairly good democratic system, for all its faults, and that kids ought to know about that and understand that and appreciate that.

R.W: So is CCE largely a celebratory thing, or a progressive thing designed to empower people?

S.F: Yes, I think it is a combination of both. I really think that, I mean, all the discussions I’ve had with the Civics Education Group, with Kemp, with other politicians and other people in the area, the advisory committee that was set up for our project. It is this empowering kids, that empowering kids within an understanding of what the system can and cannot do. And how, if they’re unhappy about what the system can do, how they can change it themselves. So it is about empowerment.

R.W: Do you think there is a risk that if young people find out how little political power they have in Australia, they might become even more disillusioned?

S.F: Yes, it is. Yes, it is cynical. Yes, I think there is a danger of that. But, if you take, I mean, they have to know the ‘warts and all’, I guess. And one of the things, I guess, I’m a little disappointed with in the materials is the warts are fairly hidden. But that’s a personal view, that has nothing to do with me as, you know. But if you look at, say, the rural stuff at the moment, it had a massive effect. I mean, all governments have completely turned around. And why have they turned around? Because they think they’re going to lose their jobs. And, I mean, it is evidence that the little people can actually make a difference. And I think they’re the sorts of things we ought to be showing kids.

R.W: So why would politicians be interested in CCE? Isn’t it risky for them to have
empowered citizens?

S.F: Yes, it is, it is. It's actually quite brave of them, in a way. I mean, I think also though, people like to be liked and certainly out of the, you know, any of the surveys, opinion polls, that have come up, people have been very negative about politicians and, I guess, that that's another reason for, you know, for actually showing that, they do do a job, they do work hard, they have some morals. I mean, I actually believe they do. It was interesting the, I don't know if you've seen the video that we did for the secondary kit, and we interviewed the people. They were all clamoring over themselves to get to be interviewed. I mean, we had no problem getting subjects at all. And Kemp was really keen on that idea because he wanted to show the human face of the politicians.

R.W: So can CCE be seen as an attempt by politicians to become the centre of attention again?

S.F: Yes, I guess so. I guess that's part of it. Yes. But, ..........

R.W: Well, you'd query the educational benefits of CCE if that was the major motive.

S.F: Human nature's like that, isn't it? I mean, you can't ... human too. But, I mean I, I do think that there is a genuine concern that the kids would actually be empowered by understanding how the system works. And, I mean, there are some fairly controversial things in the units that we, you know, thought, I mean, the Franklin Dam ... stuff, for instance. Some of the stuff in the commonwealth legal parties unit, particularly that middle-secondary unit, and got through, no problems at all.

R.W: Could you talk about the suggestion that a lot of the more controversial stuff was the result of input of the Curr Corp?

S.F: Certainly, one of our major roles that the Corporation's played, me and the rest of the staff there, has been to ensure as much as we can that the pedagogy is appropriate for kids. And they've moved a great, up a long, long way. Greg Craven said to me a couple of weeks ago, "I thought what would happen is we would do these materials and the teachers would just follow them slavishly." And I said to him, "Well, Greg, you know, I've said that all the way along, teachers will take these materials, if they're good enough, they'll adapt them for their own use." But no teacher, good or bad, will actually just do what's written in the book, because every class is different.

R.W: Right, is that a reflection of his own ignorance or a statement of his preference?

S.F: A kid's view, when I think all the civics education group, than non-education people, is it'd be a whole heap easier if we had a national curriculum. Now, and from my point of view, from working with the corporation, it would make life a lot easier too. Now, whether that though then leads to teachers slavishly following things, I think, in the initial stages, Greg and Stuart and
John, who don’t understand schools, thought that that was an appropriate way to go. But, we’ve done a fair amount of educating of them and shown them lots of different classes and they can see now, you know, there aren’t two classes in Australia alike. And so, you can’t do that. What they were concerned about though was, in all cases both sides of the story were put. So that, you know, if you look, and I agree with that, I have to say. You know, if you look at the David Owen instance in, I think political parties, it was clearly put that some people agreed with him being excluded from Australia, and some people disagreed with that. And both sides of those stories, that story, was put. And for kids to critically examine both sides and come up with their own view. And that’s really been the underlying philosophy the whole way through. And I don’t think that’s changed, right from the beginning. And I don’t think, there may have been disputes about, minor disputes about whether it was balanced or not, but there’s never been any discussion about only putting one side.

R.W: But when Keating was interested in CCE, it was seen as a pro-republican push...

S.F: I think that, look, I think that was an impetus. You know, if we’re coming up to the ... federation, I think that was another impetus. We need to examine our place as a nation in the world and one of the big issues is, obviously, our links to Britain, and for people to make sensible decisions about that, they need to understand the system.

R.W: How do you see CCE changing from the Keating to the Howard governments?

S.F: I actually don’t think it changed very much at all. In fact, we spent a fair amount of time, I mean, it was very dicey, whether the program was going to continue or not and we sat around for about nine months waiting to find out whether it was going to continue or not.

R.W: Do you think the Howard government has a commitment to CCE?

S.F: Yes, I do think they’ve got a commitment to it. And Kemp, in particular, has a very personal commitment to it. His is probably equal to Keating’s. And it was interesting that the management, originally the project was to report directly to the Prime Minister, under Keating. When Howard’d gone in, they’d moved to the Education Minister, and I think that reflects Kemp’s commitment and obvious experience in the area, I mean, he was a political scientist. I think the reason it hung around was a much more pragmatic reason and that was that there was a $17 million chunk that kept going in and out. And it could go in and out in the education budget and not effect anything else. I don’t really, I mean, I don’t know, but my guess is that it was a much more pragmatic thing and they were looking to chop things from the education budget and, you know, they did massive budget cuts in that time. It was a convenient thing, you know, you can’t, it’s much harder to shave $17 million off grants to non-government schools or off funding to universities or off, you know, support for literacy and numeracy programs, because then you’re shaving it off, you’re not just removing something. So, I really do think that was, and I
think Kemp fought hard to keep it in.

R.W: What about John Howard?

S.F: Have no idea…. No. No idea at all. He seemed pretty keen. I mean, we've sent in the materials, we've had some response back from his department. At one stage he was going to launch them, at the, the materials, but it never came good, so, I really don’t know. We've had no dealings really with PMC.

R.W: Do you put any significance on the addition of Hirst and Craven?

S.F: Well, what they did was added two people to the group, and so they added John and Greg. I thought it was very significant that they kept the original three members, particularly Stuart who's known for his left-wing views. There was a, I mean, the Liberals had to make it their program, as opposed to Keating's program, and so I think that was the reason for John's elevation to the Chair. He's been a terrific Chair, I have to say, really wonderful Got very involved in the program, sometimes a bit frustratingly so, but, yes. I think, I mean, Stuart takes a much more intellectual/academic approach to things whereas John was a lot more active. I mean, he wrote the book; he worked very closely on the units. Greg was an interesting, I, Greg's, quite, I mean, he worked for Jan Wade, so he obviously comes out of that, more right-wing approach. John Hirst, I've no idea what his politics are.

R.W: Well, he's a republican.

S.F: Yes, he worked behind the scenes in Victoria, I know, but, and has done quite a bit of radio, that sort of stuff, but, yes, he was in one of the high profiles and was prepared to relinquish his status, I guess, to, for, I mean, people like Steve Vizard . . .

R.W: Was Hirst quite amenable to the idea that the Curr Corp has educational expertise that he did not have?

S.F: Yes, yes he was.

R.W:

S.F: Yes. He certainly, he was, very stringent about having the history flavour, I guess, and I have to say Kemp is too, and I think that's another sub-text actually for the materials. It's not just really about Civics and Citizenship, it's about history and about a return to a discipline approach. And that was always a difficult thing for us, I mean, that's probably aside . . .

R.W: No, I'm interested in that. A lot of teachers are a lot more interested in an integrated approach. . .

S.F: Yes, they have. They have. They have. And certainly the History Association fear, who we had a lot to do with in, well, all throughout the program, were concerned that it would be a return to the, sort of Alice Hoy type civics, and we were absolutely determined that that was not going to happen. And, I
mean, I remember a Civics Education Group meeting where Tony Abbott, who was then Parliamentary Secretary for Kemp, was there, and he kept talking about a textbook. You know, he thought that what we were going to produce was this textbook and that kids would read it and that would be the way.

R.W: They haven’t got much idea have they?

S.F: None at all. None at all. Absolutely none. No. And, you know, when we, we kept saying, “look, that just won’t go and the kids won’t learn.” You know, you want kids to get something out of this and you want them to think better about these sort of issues then you have to present it to them in a quite different way. And that was attention to begin with. And I think the thing that turns that around was the trialing, more the trialing than the consultation, I have to say, where we got very detailed comments from our, from a large number, I mean, 160 schools we trialed the stuff in, so it was quite a big, I forget how many kids. There were probably ten thousand kids involved in the, in the trial. And, we took the risk of sending out pretty informed materials because, because, we felt that we, you know, I guess, the ones ... are closer to the original view of the Civics Education Group, they were much more didactic, they were left deliberative, I guess, in their technique, that sort of thing. And, we knew that we were going to have to re-write and in fact we started re-writing while, while the material was out being trialed. And it was really interesting to see the responses of the teachers. You can probably get those responses, if you’re interested, by going through the Corporation. But. So, the Civics Education Group were concerned that the materials were defensible in terms of their content and that’s where they concentrated their efforts mainly. And they were prepared to defer to our understanding of pedagogy... Sometimes, with a fight.

R.W: OK, that’s good. Do you think that CCE can be seen as a means of re-invigorating a set of shared national values?

S.F: Yes, I do. I do. I think it’s possible to have a reasonable debate about what those shared values might be. I don’t think it’s possible to teach tolerance. I mean, I, and the materials don’t take that line. The materials, the materials take the line of ‘here are some values that we think, that, that people consider are important. Do you agree?’

R.W: So it’s values clarification approach?

S.F: Well, yes. That’s a bit ‘wussy’, though. It’s more than that. It’s, it’s ...

R.W: Of course, this has the dangers of relativism. Kids might end up thinking they will be a Nazi.

S.F: Yes, that’s right. Well, yes, and, and it’s, I mean, the Nazi unit, the Democracy Destroyed unit is quite an interesting one cause it’s not actually about Nazism, it’s actually about principles of democracy and the values ...... And what the kids are asked to do there is to actually identify what were the principles that were eroded and then to consider how important, for
themselves, how important that was. I mean, a little interactive on, on stories does that really nicely. And so that’s the approach that we took all the time. So, I mean, in the Aims, it very clearly says that we’re on about Knowledge and Understanding, Skills and Values. And we tried to keep that balance all the way through. In writing the assessment material for the coming out in June of this year we were very clear to ACER, who did the development for us, that the assessment materials could not just be about values, about, not... they had to be about skills, and they had to be, but civic skills not, I mean.

R.W: So how is it intended to assess civic skills?

S.F: Well, things like, I’m just trying to think... There’s one on the political parties, one where they’re to write up their own constitution of their own party, that one’s actually very strongly about, they use, actually because they’re asked to, it’s a poster, I think. Either a poster or a brochure, that they’re supposed to develop. And there’s, they’re supposed to say what their party stands for, who their constituent is, constituency is, and why.

R.W: In theory, they could come up with a party like One Nation?

S.F: They could. They could. And in fact, some have. It’s, yes. It’s pretty shocking, some of the stuff you get. Actually. Yes. So, the research projects have had that sort of response, too. Yes.

R.W: The skills of teachers has been seen as a problem...

S.F: Yes. It has.

R.W: In your time with the CC... how long were you with the CC

S.F: Five years.

R.W: Do you think teachers have the skills to handle CCE?

S.F: There’s been a 40% take-up of the materials which, anyone who’s worked in education would know that that’s pretty good in twelve months. I mean, it was reported in the paper as being shocking, but in fact...

R.W: Is that the Sydney Uni Report

S.F: No, no, no. That’s based on the Erebus Report. The evaluation report, which has just been done.

R.W: Who did that?

S.F: A group called ‘Erebus’ who are a group of consultants from N.S.W. who were contracted by ‘DETYA’, to actually undertake... You can get the report off the Web. I’ll give you the URL before you go.

R.W: But Murray Print did a big report last year. What was that?
That's a very good question.

That was the one reported in the paper.

Yes, it was.

Wasn't it the Print stuff that was reported in the papers?

No. that was the Erebus Report. That ... March this year... Yes. No, that's the Erebus Report. Yes.

OK.

Look, I mean, I've been involved in lots of education reform. I remember the introduction of the Victorian Literacy Profiles in Victoria, where, you know, it was a massive program and only 10% of teachers took it up in twelve months. Frameworks took ten years to, for people to find them. Education reform is really slow and so to get a 40% take-up in the first year, is just extraordinary. And, that, you know, lots of people don't understand that. I mean, the pace of change is slow and I think it's got to do with what materials are sent out and the rotten time of the year. November's not the best time, so you're, sort of, twelve months behind anyway. I think, I mean, we judge that November was better than January because, then, you had some chance, at least in secondary schools, of people having a bit of time at the end of the year and maybe considering them. So that's why we went...

In terms of teachers being ready, the knowledge base of teachers is as bad as the rest of the population, I think.

So, that the skill base, in terms of, I mean, the skill base in terms of the pedagogy, I mean, is as good as any other, other part of S.O.S.E. and I think that's a bit variable. And I think it's as variable in Maths or in English, too. So, putting that aside, I think there is a knowledge deficit. I mean, I don't know how much Civics Education you had when you were at school, but I know I had none.

We came out of the decades when it had died.

That's right. That's right. I mean all I can remember about History and Geography were explorers and, you know, and drawing arrows on rivers. And I don't remember anything, at all, about, about the political system. Now, I mean, I don't come out of a S.O.S.E. background, of course, but, and I think they've got worse. You know, when you look at kids, you know, my daughter's nineteen, she knows nothing about politics at all. And these are the people that, you know, this is the generation that's now teaching our kids. From us to Elizabeth. And, so that, I think, there's a bit of nervousness among teachers about whether they can actually do it.

And there's a bit of nervousness, too, about, it's a difficult topic to teach fairly. There's a consideration that they, the teachers might be biased. You
know, there’s been a lot of teacher bashing over the last few years, so I think, that makes teachers more nervous too.

R.W: How strong is the notion that teachers must be even handed?

S.F: It came out very strongly in the Australian Parent Council Survey which was the survey that was, was done for Independent Schools. I think it was only, no it wasn’t, it was done in government schools as well, and certainly parents expressed concerns that there might be some brainwashing going on. That, you know, teachers are lefties and hence it’s going to be a biased.

R.W: That is a distorted view.

S.F: Absolutely.

R.W: So how can you address that?

S.F: Well, the only way we can address it is really through the materials and, and that was why, that’s another good reason for making sure that the materials were presented in a balanced way. The danger of doing that, of course, is they become so bland, they’re boring for the kids. So, you know, you have to, you know, it was a trick, actually. It was a real challenge to actually make sure that both sides were presented but they were presented in a way that was critical and made kids think about it. I do think it’s a fallacy. I don’t think teachers present things in a biased way. I mean, of course, there are some exceptions, but they by far, are the exception. I think, teachers are concerned that they present things in a reasonable way and help kids make up their own minds. And, you know, sometimes when you get the shocking responses, you realise that their values are different around the country. I mean, you know, there was one research project where Underage Sex was the, was the topic that was taken up by one school and it was just appalling. I have never seen such biased, sexist, terrible stuff. But, anyway.

R.W: Do you think CCE is a bit out of sync with other broad trends in education?

S.F: Yes. I mean, I think that the move towards accountability for schools and systems is actually a good one. I, . . .

R.W: Meaning, meaning?

S.F: I think schools, when I look at reports like the recent one into Indigenous Education, the Collins Report, in the Northern Territory, and I see that 5% of indigenous kids achieve their literacy benchmarks. I want those schools accountable for that. I think that’s appalling. I don’t think that should happen. I don’t believe, for any minute, that indigenous kids are any different to any other sort of kids and that their, that the government has a responsibility to make them learn as well, and achieve as well, as any other kid. And solutions have to be made. And if accountability helps that, then I’m prepared, I’m prepared to support it. And I think it does. I mean, so, so, is that what you’re talking about, about the general move in education, I actually do support accountability?
R.W: So CCE could be seen as a bit of waste of time..

S.F: Yes, yes. I think that’s true. And I think that, that the demise of the humanities, in general, is, is of a real concern. And if civics can help improve that, I know, I mean, I come from a Maths/Science background, so, but it still really concerns me that, you know, kids can go through school these days, particularly in Year 11 and 12, having, what I think, is a totally unbiased study, and not knowing anything about the world around them, really. I mean, Maths and Accountancy doesn’t help you much when you come to knowing about the world that you’re going to live in. And, yes, I do, I really think that’s the problem.

R.W: Why is it a problem?

S.F: Well, because you get ‘unrounded’ kids coming out. You get, you get kids who are only focused on, on the dollar and themselves and I think that’s bad for society. I have no solutions as to how it’s going to, going to turn around. And, and I think that is the difference between education today and say, the education I had in the sixties.

R.W: Although we didn’t do any of it...

S.F: We didn’t do any Civics, but we did do some History and Geography and we did study some... and there was a sense that education was about learning as well as about getting a job. And, you could do that then, I guess, because it was for employment, and, you know, I mean, we, I think, a ‘Lucky Generation’...

R.W: So we need to compensate for that by concentrating on citizenship per se?

S.F: Yes, I do. I do. And I think that was, that was definitely the reason why the program was centered on the Years it was centered on, you know, the sort of, three/four to ten, so that is was firmly in the compulsory years of schooling, that it didn’t interfere with the early years of schooling where literacy and numeracy were seen to be more important. I agree with that, I think. The, yes, I mean why Civics and not History?

R.W: Well you could see History is a hit and miss thing couldn’t you?

S.F: You could.

R.W: Historical events are open to interpretation.

S.F: I guess so. I guess so. I guess it’s also sexier, isn’t it? I mean, it’s easier to sell from a political point of view. I mean, this has been a really interesting project in that, it’s been an education project, but it’s also been, in order to manage it, you’ve got to, you had to attend to the politics on all levels. From, the politics between the states and the territories, the, sort of, NGO community groups sort of politics, and the capital ‘P’ politics. And it’s, I mean, that’s what makes it so fascinating, from my point of view.
R.W: A lot of those political aspects come down to different views of citizenship.

S.F: Absolutely. Absolutely. I mean, the big debate was the balance between Civics and Citizenship and . . .

R.W: How do you differentiate between them?

S.F: Well, I guess, in the purest sense, Civics is about the knowledge and Citizenship is about the application. My view is that you can't do the application until you've got the knowledge, or at least at the same time, as when you've got the knowledge. You can't work the system for yourself until you know how it works.

R.W: How much knowledge do you have? What sort of knowledge is Kemp talking about?

S.F: No, I think, he is actually talking about it at, knowledge is probably the wrong word, in fact, we've got fuck on if word, knowledge, it's really about concepts, it's really about the fact the we have a bi-cameral system, and why do we have a bi-cameral system, and does it work. You know, if it's there to keep, you know, some ..., some safe-guards in, does it actually work, and you know, hopefully kids will understand that, in fact, it probably doesn't.

R.W: It probably doesn't?

S.F: No. Well, I don't think it does. I mean, obvious, I mean, . . .

R.W: Ah. . .

S.F: That's a personal opinion.

R.W: Well, that's a good time to talk about the title, 'Discovering Democracy. Is it designed to have kids discover the existing democracy, or build a new form of Australian democracy?

S.F: I think, well, personally, I like the kids to be skeptical about things.

R.W: So perhaps starting from the view that Australian democracy is not in great shape?

S.F: I actually do think Australian Democracy is in as good a shape as most, as other places in the world.

R.W: But if it's in great shape, then why worry about it?

S.F: I don't think it's perfect, though. I mean, I don't. I mean, as I said, I don't think the bi-cameral system actually works. And, you know, you look at the power that someone like Harradine had in the previous government, I mean it . . .
Continuing -
I think what the Civics Education Group, and I think what Kemp wants kids to be able to do, is to actually understand what are the concepts that underpin our democracy and then to be a bit skeptical about their implementation, and, and to care about it enough to want to make it better. But not also to say, oh, we’re a terrible place, you know, that we, we are undemocratic. Because we’re not. I mean, if you compare Australia to most other countries in the world, you know, on the scale of things, we’re probably up there on an ‘8’. But, we’re certainly not a ‘10’. But by the same token, we’re not a ‘2’ either. And, but, I want kids to make up their mind about that. And that’s, and I really do think, that’s the, sort of, underlying philosophy . . . that the whole, the whole program has actually taken. Remember the school materials, while they’re the linchpin, they’re not the whole program. There are other things to it that, professional development, which is absolutely critical, and the programs that have looked at the parents and the principals, and, I mean, it’s a very well designed program. I take no credit for that, that’s entirely Noel Simpson, and the DETYA people, that actually put the program together. And, and that’s going to be the thing that’s going to make Civics and Citizenship education better in Australia, having some decent materials that you can actually use as a base, having lots of other things, like the Electoral Education Program, the PEO stuff, the, the sorts of activities that you used to run, that you can fit around it, and put it together as a whole thing, I think is really important. And improving teacher’s comfort levels, skills, interests, is another important facet which is the PD. And I know with this new money that’s just been announced, that the vast majority of that money will go into professional development. I mean, there are basically enough materials, I mean, there’s enough there, if you did every single thing in those materials, you would only be doing Discovering Democracy. And that’s obviously not right. I mean, you want kids to understand other things about Australia apart from just that narrow political dimension. And, it was a bit of a challenge sometimes to, to restrict it to the political dimension cause, you know, want to spin off and I’m darn sure that schools are actually spinning off into other things. They’d have to, yes.

The readers were an interesting development and I think they really complement the, the units because what they do is take a much less, what’s the word, I guess they’re not as bold as the units. The units are fairly prescriptive. I mean, we actually chose to have a, a very sort of, seemingly, lock-step approach through the units because we had a view that if you make it fairly sequential, then it’s easy for teachers to just pull out bits and put their own in. Whereas the readers are much more ‘let’s have a look at some bits of literature and some famous paintings and talk about the values and principles that underpin those. And then go back and have a look at that concept that it’s talking about through the units’, you know. You know, I mean, the whole package of materials just within the school materials project have been put together to be seen as a whole so that teachers can actually select bits from, from a range of materials and put together their own program that, that suits the needs of their kids.