



Tumut High School Policy Document

"THS supports a SAFE learning community which develops RESPECTFUL and RESPONSIBLE citizens"

Controversial Issues In School Procedures

RATIONALE

Previously parents and teachers held clear and generally common expectations of each other's task and there was a social consensus that some topics would be excluded from being taught at school. That situation has changed. Teachers and students increasingly face changing, complex societal issues which are less clearly defined. At times there will be matters which will be considered controversial by some parents. In this context, it is important for schools to protect and foster practices which have implications for the rights of teachers, students and parents.

IMPLEMENTATION

Schools are places where students are preparing for informed and reasoned involvement in community life. The school's educational policies and programs are developed within a state-wide framework of values and systemic objectives. The NESA website can be accessed to view current syllabuses taught in schools. (<https://syllabus.nesa.nsw.edu.au/> & <https://educationstandards.nsw.edu.au/wps/portal/nesa/11-12/Understanding-the-curriculum/syllabuses-a-z>)

At Tumut High School staff:

- in discussions of controversial issues, will ensure that opinions are expressed and evidence is presented impartially.
- will, when a statement of a teacher's view may be necessary to help students formulate their own views or to answer a request from students, make a balanced and restrained statement, which will be presented as one opinion to be considered critically along with any others.
- will, when confronted with syllabus content of a controversial nature, maintain communication between the school, the students and the parents in relation to the school's educational program and the principles on which it is based. The teacher has the responsibility to inform parents, prior to the occasion, of the specific details of the program, so that the parents have time to exercise their right to withdraw their child from a particular session. In this regard, a parent's decision will be respected.
- will communicate to parents in a variety of ways, depending on the context and nature of the issue considered controversial. In these situations, the school will use one or a combination of the following: a letter home with students; information posted on the school website; articles written in the school newsletter; emails sent to parents/carers; community information sessions.
- will make available this document to teachers, parents and carers at the beginning of each year and make students aware of their right to exclude themselves from activities addressing controversial issues.

Related Department of Education Policies & Documents

Controversial Issues in Schools Policy, 2021:

<https://policies.education.nsw.gov.au/policy-library/policies/controversial-issues-in-schools>

Guide for parents:

<https://educationstandards.nsw.edu.au/wps/portal/nesa/parents/parent-guide/high-school-hsc>