In December 2007, Social Education Victoria launched the Social Education: A statement for Victorian schools booklet. The purpose of this document is to promote and support the teaching of Social Education throughout Victoria. The goal of Social Education is “to enable students to participate effectively in society, to make informed judgements and decisions and take actions to improve our lives. This goal involves the development of knowledge, skills and values, habits of questioning and reflection, analytical skills, an understanding of and commitment to democratic process, and practical knowledge and experience of social and political action.” (SEV, 2007, p. 2)

An important part of developing this statement was to become explicit about what is the essence of teaching social education and its importance to today’s and tomorrow’s children and society. This importance is seen in the declaration of four focus areas that are considered critical to the organisation of Social Education. These four areas are: Valuing democracy; Achieving a Peaceful World; Achieving a Just World and Achieving an Ecological and Sustainable World. It would be interesting to hear how influential such a statement has been on your teaching and understanding of Social Education and the Humanities in schools. In teacher education courses, the statement has served as an introduction to the field of learning, bringing focus to key concepts, knowledge skills and understanding of this discipline.

Nationally, the curriculum horizon in Humanities is moving with the advent of a national History and Geography curriculum. Whilst the implications are uncertain, it is clear that there has been a favourable shift in attitudes towards social education to Australian schools. The peak national social education organisation SEAA is corresponding with Ministers of Education to restate the case for the social sciences and civics and citizenship education in Australia today.

This edition of Ethos, whilst not intentional at the time of planning, has provided resources to support each of the focus areas of social education — to support the areas of Valuing Democracy; Achieving a Peaceful World; Achieving a Just World and Achieving an Ecological and Sustainable World across VCE, VELS and Civics and Citizenship Education.

A personal response from Janine Forbes, who attended the national Values Education conference, reflects on the work of the Springtales School in India. This school promotes and advocates across the curriculum for a strong values and CCE focus through a range of programs. The emphasis on tests and exams is minimal, with learning central to the projects in the school. Cathie Holden reports on her longitudinal research project that traces the children’s views of the future across three countries. This is interesting reading as these views on the future are expressed and compared.

How many students can name and provide capital cities for countries in the Pacific? Max Quanchi and Samantha Rose certainly challenged my knowledge in their article about the Pacific. This article concludes that the teaching of the Pacific is marginal and spasmodic across Australia today. It argues for an increased presence of the Pacific within our own teaching and the curriculum.

To support teaching for Achieving a just and peaceful world Irene Nicola provides an outline for teaching VELS at level 5. She advocates for religious understanding through artefacts and costume to illustrate this understanding. John Langmore describes and explains the role played by the United Nations in global peace keeping for VCE International Studies students and teachers.

Geoff Glue provides a personal view on teaching Units 3 and 4 National Politics, sharing insights and advice on teaching this course. Rod Wise provides a response to the newly released book by Andrew Scott that could be used to support teaching National Politics in schools.

The next SEAA conference will be held in Adelaide in February 2010. The program promises to educate and encourage social educators across Australia and internationally. I hope that this edition of Ethos supports your teaching in schools and your thinking as an educator. I am at all times interested in your feedback on this reading.