



Students First—Review of the Australian Curriculum

Submission to Professor K Wiltshire AO and Dr A Donnelly

This submission addresses the importance of first aid learning in the Australian Curriculum for students Foundation—10.

Life Saving First Aid in Schools

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the *Students First: Review of the Australian Curriculum* ('the Curriculum').

The inclusion of first aid learning for students of all ages is essential if morbidity and mortality are to be reduced or prevented in the Australian community. St John Ambulance Australia believes the first aid learning prescribed in the current (draft) *Health and Physical Education Curriculum* is not sufficient to achieve a significant reduction in morbidity and mortality and is not in line with international best practice.

This submission aims to reinforce St John's previous position on the importance of age appropriate first aid learning for students from Foundation to Year 10, and advocate the importance of strengthening this learning in any future version of the Australian Curriculum.

This submission addresses the following key points for consideration:

- Why first aid training for all ages?
- Proposed first aid learning—Foundation to year 10.

St John advocates the inclusion of *age appropriate* first aid learning in the Australian Curriculum from Foundation to 10 including first aid learning for:

- all ages that is centred around the St John DRSABCD Action Plan
- all secondary students that includes the administration of CPR
- secondary students that includes the areas of bleeding and burns.

St John believes the inclusion of age appropriate first aid learning will lead to a prepared and motivated student population, willing to assist during an emergency. Taking action to increase student participation in first aid learning will also develop a culture of first aid preparedness in Australia longitudinally. In ensuring the compulsory learning of first aid by students, Australia has an opportunity of achieving the benchmark set by the American Heart Association of 20% of a population being trained in life saving first aid skills.¹ St John has no doubt that such action by Australia *will* save lives.

For more information about St John Ambulance Australia please visit www.stjohn.org.au.

Why First Aid learning for all ages?

- **Children are often the first at the scene of an accident.**
- **Teaching first aid is international best practice.**

First aid saves lives.

Studies have suggested that if just 20% of a population is trained in basic first aid, a significant reduction in morbidity could be achieved.¹ It is therefore important that a culture of learning first aid is developed from an early age, particularly centred around the St John Ambulance DRSABCD Action Plan (see Appendix A).

Children are often the first at the scene of an accident or emergency (e.g. in the home, at the school playground or a road traffic accident) and are often required to act when no adult is available to assist. Ensuring that children know how to act during an emergency is therefore essential if more lives are to be saved. Sometimes it is the most basic acts, such as ensuring an airway is clear, that will save a life.

Research proves that children as young as 6 or 7 years *can* save a life.² As a result, there has been increasing emphasis internationally on teaching basic first aid to school aged children as the school years may provide guaranteed exposure to such learning.^{3, 1, 4}

Training in first aid and Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation ('CPR') for school students began in Norway in the 1960s. Since then, Canada, Great Britain, the United States, Scandinavia and many other European countries have adopted teaching school children compulsory first aid and CPR due to its public health benefits.^{3, 5} Further, the European Resuscitation Council, the American Heart Association and American Academy of Paediatrics have recognised the importance of teaching school aged children first aid and CPR and have recommended that these skills be taught in school aged children.⁴ Longitudinally, teaching first aid to school aged children will ultimately ensure the increased awareness and training of the Australian population en masse in life-saving first aid. Further, St John believes developing knowledge and skills in the first aid area is an important part of maintaining and promoting good health and influencing the choices of the individual.

St John considers teaching first aid to school students to be international best practice and believes Australia must adopt compulsory first aid if more lives are to be saved.

Bayswater mother and son Julie and Alex Ambrosi

In May this year, Geoff and his son Alex were playing in the park across the road from their house when suddenly Geoff collapsed and was suffering a sudden cardiac arrest. Quick thinking Alex knew not to leave his dad's side, and shouted to his mother, Julie who was inside the house at the time. Julie rushed out and used the first aid skills she had learnt at a St John Ambulance first aid course recently to begin CPR on her husband as Alex rang for an ambulance. Alex spoke to the communications officers over the phone and relayed advice to Julie while she continued performing CPR on Geoff until the ambulance arrived. Both Alex and Julie remained calm and focused the entire time and when talking to the communications officers, Alex even referenced the DRSABCD first aid response. While the ambulance took only four minutes to arrive, the first few minutes after a cardiac arrest are crucial and thanks to their quick thinking and first aid know-how, Alex and Julie helped save Geoff's life.

Story courtesy of St John Ambulance Australia (WA), (2011)

Proposed first aid learning—Foundation to year 10

Some critics suggest that younger children are unable to perform CPR effectively as older children or adults. However, research suggests that children as young as 6 and 7 can learn basic life support and children as 11 years have been assessed as capable of achieving full depth chest compressions in CPR, placing a patient into the recovery position, maintaining an airway and calling for help.^{2,6} In fact, by commencing first aid training at a young age and with regular reinforcement, it is considered that school children have the prospect of greater skill attainment and retention than their adult learner counterparts.⁶

St John has a long history and proven track record of successfully teaching children and young people first aid skills through our Junior and Cadet programs (for ages 8 to 17 years). St John has been providing first aid training to young people since 1925, when the Cadet program was first introduced in Australia. Over the years, many of our Juniors and Cadets have saved a life or prevented life-threatening injury through the application of basic first aid skills.

BUNBURY high school student is being hailed a hero after acting on instinct' to save the life of a man lying unconscious on a Bunbury street. Waiting on Stephen Street to be picked up after school last Wednesday, Aaron Hart stepped in to perform CPR on a man for 15 minutes until an ambulance arrived.

The 16-year-old, who has trained as a St John Ambulance Event First Aid Services cadet since he was eight, went to investigate after seeing a crowd gather. Discovering an unconscious man being helped by people with limited first aid knowledge, his training kicked in.

"My impulse was to see if I could help I said I had a senior first aid certificate," he said. "It was just instinct."

St John Ambulance station manager Chris Wilks heaped praise on the teenager who, he said, had kept the man alive.

"Aaron really stepped up to the plate," Mr Wilks said. "He was really competent in what he was doing and gave the person the best possible opportunity for a good outcome."

Mr Wilks said he wished more people in the community were as well versed in first aid as the young hero. "It's essential if an ambulance takes more than three or four minutes to get there in a very critical event, time's ticking away and it makes it much, much more difficult to get a good result."

South Western Times (2012, 8 March).

First aid Cadet puts training into action. Bunbury

Our Junior and Cadet programs provide age appropriate learning in a fun environment. Juniors (ages 8 to 12) learn important skills such as what to do at the scene of an accident, basic wound care, burns, bleeding and managing choking. Cadets (ages 12 to 17) then go on to more advanced learning including topics such as airways, breathing, CPR and defibrillation plus the management of many other specific conditions (such as asthma, angina, snake bites and much more) and receive opportunities to treat members of the community at first aid events. The learning of first aid in both programs revolves about the St John DRSABCD Action plan (see Appendix A).

As a result, St John can speak with authority to the success and ability of young people in retaining and performing first aid skills from a young age.

To be effective, first aid learning needs to be incorporated into the Curriculum for all ages, it is an important part of holistic approach to health literacy. As such, we make the following recommendations for age appropriate first aid learning:

- First Aid learning be centred around the St John DRSABCD Action Plan.
- First Aid learning be age appropriate.
- First Aid learning for secondary students include the areas of bleeding and burns management.

Please refer to Appendix 2 for detailed learning recommendations by age group (Foundation to Year 10).

Appendix A

The St John Ambulance Australia DRSABCD Action Plan

The DRSABCD Action Plan is a vital aid to the first aider in assessing whether or not the patient has any life-threatening conditions and if any immediate first aid is necessary:

Danger—ensure the area is safe for yourself, others and the patient

Response—check for response—ask name—squeeze shoulders. Is the patient responsive? Yes? No? If yes, make the patient comfortable and monitor their response. If no, proceed to ‘S’

Send for help—**Call triple zero (000)** for an ambulance or ask another person to make the call

Airway—open mouth. If foreign material present, place in the recovery position and clear airway with fingers

Breathing—check for breathing—look, listen, feel. If not normal breathing, commence CPR. If normal breathing, place in recovery position and monitor breathing.

CPR—Start CPR—30 compressions: 2 breaths. Continue CPR until help arrives or patient recovers.

Defibrillator—Apply defibrillator if available and follow voice prompts.

Appendix B

Age appropriate learning recommendations

Foundation (typically 5-6 years of age)

First Aid understanding	<p>Danger:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• understanding how to check for danger to the self, the patient or bystanders before helping someone in an accident/emergency situation• recognising different types of accidents/emergencies <p>Response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• learning how to determine if the patient is responsive (i.e. calling their name or hello, or gently squeezing their shoulders) <p>Send for help:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• learning how to call an ambulance• learning what to say to the ambulance all centre
First Aid practical skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• demonstrate how to roll the patient into the recovery position• demonstrate how to call an ambulance

Year 1-2 (typically 6-8 years of age)

First Aid understanding	<p>Danger:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• understanding how to check for danger to the self, the patient or bystanders in an accident/emergency situation• recognising different types of accidents/emergencies• identifying how accidents can happen <p>Response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• learning how to determine if the patient is responsive (i.e. calling their name or hello, or gently squeezing their shoulders) <p>Send for help:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• learning how and when to call an ambulance• learning what to say to the ambulance all centre
First Aid practical skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• demonstrate how to roll the patient into the recovery position• demonstrate how to call an ambulance

Year 3-4 (typically 8-10 years of age)

First Aid understanding	<p>Danger:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• understanding how to check for danger to the self, the patient or bystanders in an accident/emergency situation• recognising different types of accidents/emergencies• identifying how accidents can happen• identify strategies for avoiding accidents <p>Response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• learning how to determine if the patient is responsive (i.e. calling their name or hello, or gently squeezing their shoulders) <p>Send for help:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• learning how and when to call an ambulance• learning what to say to the ambulance all centre
First Aid practical skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• demonstrate how to roll the patient into the recovery position• demonstrate how to call an ambulance

Year 5-6 (typically 10-12 years of age)

<p>First Aid understanding</p>	<p>Danger:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understanding how to check for danger to the self, the patient or bystanders in an accident/emergency situation • recognising different types of accidents/emergencies • identifying how accidents can happen • identify strategies for avoiding accidents <p>Response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • learning how to determine if the patient is responsive (i.e. calling their name or hello, or gently squeezing their shoulders) <p>Send for help:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • learning how and when to call an ambulance • learning what to say to the ambulance all centre <p>Airway</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify when an airway is blocked • understand how to clear a blocked airway
<p>First Aid practical skills</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate how to roll the patient into the recovery position • demonstrate how to call an ambulance • demonstrate how to clear a blocked airway

Year 7-8 (typically 12-14 years of age)

<p>First Aid understanding</p>	<p>Danger:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understanding how to check for danger to the self, the patient or bystanders in an accident/emergency situation • recognising different types of accidents/emergencies • identifying how accidents can happen • identify strategies for avoiding accidents <p>Response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • learning how to determine if the patient is responsive (i.e. calling their name or hello, or gently squeezing their shoulders) <p>Send for help:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • learning how and when to call an ambulance • learning what to say to the ambulance all centre <p>Airway</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify when an airway is blocked • understand how to clear a blocked airway <p>Breathing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify if a patient is breathing (look, listen, feel) <p>CPR:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • learn the correct technique for compressions and breathing • learn the correct compression : breath rate (30 : 2) <p>Defibrillator:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • learn the basics of how to identify a defibrillator and explain the need to follow voice prompts <p>Bleeding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • recognise bleeding from an artery, vein or capillary • learn how to control various types of bleeding (i.e. to a limb, head wound or internal bleeding) • learn basic infection control skills for dealing with bleeding • identify how to dispose of soiled waste
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First Aid practical skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate how to roll the patient into the recovery position • demonstrate how to call an ambulance • demonstrate how to clear a blocked airway • demonstrate how to determine if a patient is breathing • demonstrate how to give compressions and breaths and the correct compression and breath rate • demonstrate how to treat different types of bleeding • demonstrate how to prevent infection • demonstrate correct disposal of soiled waste
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Year 9-10 (typically 14-16 years of age)

First Aid understanding	<p>Danger:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understanding how to check for danger to the self, the patient or bystanders in an accident/emergency situation • recognising different types of accidents/emergencies • identifying how accidents can happen • identify strategies for avoiding accidents <p>Response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • learning how to determine if the patient is responsive (i.e. calling their name or hello, or gently squeezing their shoulders) <p>Send for help:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • learning how and when to call an ambulance • learning what to say to the ambulance all centre <p>Airway</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify when an airway is blocked • understand how to clear a blocked airway <p>Breathing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify if a patient is breathing (look, listen, feel) <p>CPR:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • learn the correct technique for compressions and breathing • learn the correct compression : breath rate (30 : 2) <p>Defibrillator:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • learn the basics of how to identify a defibrillator and explain the need to follow voice prompts <p>Bleeding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • recognise bleeding from an artery, vein or capillary • learn how to control various types of bleeding (i.e. to a limb, head wound or internal bleeding) • learn basic infection control skills for dealing with bleeding • identify how to dispose of soiled waste <p>Burns:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understand the causes of burns and methods of prevention • understand what happens to tissue when burnt • learn how to manage a burn
First Aid practical skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate how to roll the patient into the recovery position • demonstrate how to call an ambulance • demonstrate how to clear a blocked airway • demonstrate how to determine if a patient is breathing • demonstrate how to give compressions and breaths and the correct compression and breath rate

- demonstrate how to treat different types of bleeding
- demonstrate how to prevent infection
- demonstrate correct disposal of soiled waste
- demonstrate how to manage a burn

Note:

* St John Ambulance Australia argues that all learner drivers should know how to perform basic first aid before gaining a driver's licence so that they know what to do in the event of coming across a motor vehicle accident. Year 9 – 10 is an ideal time to learn these skills before learning to drive.

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