

Learning First Aid in Schools

St John Ambulance Australia would like to thank the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) for the opportunity to comment on the *Australia Curriculum: Health and Physical Education, Draft for Consultation* ('the Curriculum').

In response to the Curriculum, this submission addresses the following key points for ACARA's consideration.

- Current inclusion of First Aid principles
- Recommendations for First Aid learning

For more information about St John Ambulance Australia please see Appendix 1.

Current inclusion of first aid principles

St John Ambulance Australia congratulates ACARA on the inclusion of 'first aid' and believes that the current wording is sufficient for:

- Years 7 and 8 - Section 5.7
 - demonstrating basic first aid principles and strategies to respond to emergencies
- Years 9 and 10 – Section 6.5
 - Planning and practising responses to emergencies where they may be required to administer first aid to a friend

The specific inclusion of learning first aid principles and strategies around responding to emergencies in years 7, 8, 9 and 10 of the curriculum is welcomed by St John Ambulance Australia as a critical part of health and physical education. It is an important step in a creating holistic approach to health literacy in the area of first aid and we commend ACARA for the proposed inclusion.

Recommendations for First Aid learning

Currently, First Aid is not explicitly mentioned within the Primary school Curriculum. For effective First Aid learning St John recommends that it should be incorporated within both the Primary and the Secondary school curriculum. Teaching First Aid to all school students is important. Children are often the first at the scene of an incident and can be in a position to make a difference. First Aid learning to all students is also considered international best practice.

Children also thrive on continuity in learning, and learning First Aid is no exception. Continuity in learning creates a solid understanding and acquisition of the subject matter that cannot be replicated in any other way.

First Aid learning can be incorporated within the areas of staying safe and active within the community as currently stated within the draft Curriculum. St John Ambulance Australia makes the following recommended amendments to the following sections of the Curriculum:

Foundation content descriptions and elaborations

Section 1.4 Explore and practice daily habits that promote health and wellbeing, regular physical activity, safe practices and protective behaviours.

St John recommended additions:

- *Identifying situations that may require the help of other emergency services such as ambulance, police and fire.*
- *Rehearsing a phone call to emergency services Triple-zero through role play.*

St John recommends this addition to Section 1.4 as learning how to identify emergency situations and rehearsing phone calls to emergency services can provide a solid basis to learning first aid in later years. It is important to be able to give emergency services all the information they require about the location of the accident, the type of accident, the number of patients and the types of injuries as this information can save lives.

An example of this type of life saving effort is:

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)

Section 1.5 Identify the people who are important to them and describe how they help keep them safe.

Original wording:

- Naming trusted people in their community who can help them stay safe such as family, peers, local police or lifeguard.

St John recommended additions:

- *Naming trusted people in their community who can help them stay safe such as family, peers, local police, lifeguard or first aider.*

St John recommends the addition of the term 'first aider' as a trusted member of the community. First aiders, including St John first aiders, are commonplace at public events across Australia, and being able to identify a first aider quickly could be extremely important in an emergency situation.

Years 1 and 2 content descriptions and elaborations

Section 2.7 Describe a range of strategies they can use when they need help with a task, problem or situation.

St John recommended addition:

- *Identifying situations requiring first aid or an ambulance such as drowning, injuries, poisoning or unconscious family member.*

St John also recommends the addition of this to section 2.7 as being able to quickly identify a situation where first aid is required can be critical in an emergent situation. Research suggests that learning through repetition is essential to gaining a firm understanding of subject matter, therefore it is important to repeat this learning each year of a child's education to instill this knowledge into them.

Years 3 and 4 content descriptions and elaborations

Section 3.7 Practise and apply a range of skills they can use if they find themselves in a situation that makes them feel uncomfortable or unsafe.

St John recommended additions:

- *Identify situations requiring first aid or an ambulance, calling triple zero and giving appropriate responses to an emergency operator's questions.*
- *Assisting an unconscious breathing person by putting them into the recovery position*
- *Identify items around the home that could cause burns and identify prevention and treatment methods.*

As suggested previously, St John recommends the addition of being able to identify emergency situations as it is a critical skill to develop. Having the ability to put a person in the recovery position which maintains the

airway of the person is an important, and relatively simple, life saving skill for a child of eight to ten years to be able to complete.

An example of this type of life saving effort is:

South Perth Resident Euan Rainnie

Euan had recently participated in a First Aid Training course through his school, as part of St John Ambulance's First Aid Focus schools program. Little did he know that soon after he would go on to use these skills to save his mother's life. In April this year, Euan's mother Rowena was in the pool, when Euan looked over the balcony and noticed her lying face down in the water. Rowena had suffered a diabetic low and became unconscious while in the pool. Euan ran downstairs, jumped into the pool and pulled her into the shallow end before using the basic first aid principles of checking for a response and seeing if she was breathing. Hearing the distress call from Euan, the neighbours rushed over, pulled Rowena from the pool, placed her in a recovery position and together with Euan, monitored her breathing until the ambulance arrived. Euan remembered to follow the DRSABCD acronym that he had learnt through the First Aid training and remained completely calm while coming to his mother's aid. Euan's knowledge of first aid and his incredible act of care for his mother saved her life.

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

In years three and four St John recommends the addition of the preventing and treatment of burns as a core learning unit because burns are common, the treatment can be easily understood by a student in years three or four and can have a substantial positive impact.

Years 5 and 6 content descriptions and elaborations

Section 4.9 Practice and refine decision making skills and take positive action to manage their own and others' health, safety and wellbeing.

St John recommended additions:

- *Identifying dangers to you, others and the injured person in a first aid situation.*
- *Checking the response of an injured person to find out if they are conscious or unconscious, opening an airway and checking the breathing of an unconscious person.*
- *Giving essential information to the emergency services when calling triple zero.*

St John recommends the addition of being able to identify dangers to the first aider, the injured person and others as safety is a priority to everyone involved in the emergency situation. Having the ability to check the response of a person and able to open and maintain an airway of the person is a critical skill to be able to develop. St John also recommends the rehearsing of phone calls to emergency services. As previously stated repetition in learning is important and can provide a solid basis to learning first aid in later years. The three recommended additions to Section 4.9 are the first three steps to the DRSABCD Action Plan.

Glossary

St John Ambulance also recommends the addition of the term “first aid” in the Glossary with the following wording:

First Aid

First aid is the initial care of the ill or injured and usually is given by someone who is on the spot when a person becomes ill or injured.

Appendix 1

About St John Ambulance Australia

St John Ambulance Australia is a self-funding charitable organisation active in all States and Territories, dedicated to helping people in sickness, distress, suffering or danger.

St John provides:

- First aid training
- First aid kits
- First aid services at community and public events, and assistance during national disaster relief, through volunteers
- A range of community care services for the aged, the infirm, the immobile and lonely
- Ambulance services in Western Australia and the Northern Territory
- Funding and support for Ophthalmic services at the St John Jerusalem Eye Hospital, in East Timor and in Australian communities
- A national youth development program for young people aged 8 to 18 years;
- Public access defibrillators throughout the Australian community.

We have been active in Australia for over 125 years, and internationally are part of a wider organisation with a long and honourable history.