

Time to speak up for home economics

We sometimes hear the catchcry 'Bring back home economics'. Bring it back? We know of countless schools with thriving, dynamic home economics programs that deliver great outcomes for their students. To paraphrase Mark Twain, reports of our demise are greatly exaggerated.

Here are the facts: we are alive, we are vital, and the community wants more!

Right across Australia, home economics teachers have long been the backbone of life-skills education. Calls to 'bring it back' reflect an abiding respect for the work of these teachers and high regard for their capabilities, fuelled by a surge in community energy and action regarding food, cooking and health. These calls also reflect concern about changes in families, loss of food preparation skills and burgeoning rates of obesity, particularly among children.

For home economics teachers this shifting mood means renewed recognition and validation: for them it feels like the world is catching up with what they have been teaching and advocating all along. It is also a call to action for the home economics profession, a great opportunity to refocus curriculum to the contemporary and urgent needs of students and their families.

We do understand the misperception about home economics in schools. Over the years we have sometimes had to decipher curriculum language and fashions in order to confirm the continued existence of home economics in our nation's schools. Sometimes our subject's very name has been lost, a sure-fire way to quickly lose identity. It is not an exaggeration to say that in some Australian states home economics has survived in spite of the officially mandated curriculum, not because of it.

Some of you may well be asking: What is home economics all about these days?

Food literacy, and nutrition, consumer citizenship, food preparation skills: all are at the heart of home economics, and all are essential for healthy, independent and sustainable living. The broad discipline of home economics encompasses management, decision-making and the mastery of a range of practical arts. The key elements of home economics empower young people to take responsibility for their own physical, mental and social wellbeing.

We have our own question: Why wouldn't every school offer home economics?

We are not just talking about secondary schools, where teachers are most likely to have home economics qualifications and specialised facilities for their classes. Secondary school programs have excellent potential to link with primary schools and there are many examples of successful engagement between secondary home economics teachers and primary school health-promotion initiatives.

At Home Economics Victoria we have been providing leadership, support and services to teachers for over fifty years. We have a membership of over 1000 teachers and run a very busy full-time office. Every day we witness the increasing potential of home economics as we engage with school education programs and health-promotion partnerships with government and non-government organisations.

We are happy to assist all Australian teachers and schools. What do we offer?

- Consultancy and support – membership categories include individual, institutional and interstate. Join up today!
- Workshops and conferences – an extensive program covering food and hospitality, textiles, health and human development, graduate support, student revision and more.
- Publications and resources – including beautiful posters, junior and senior curriculum support and collaborative texts such as the iconic *Cookery the Australian Way*.
- Postgraduate training to become a home economics teacher – as an RTO we provide nationally recognised training in a range of courses.

In an additional role that is currently keeping us very busy, Home Economics Victoria is the host organisation of the 22nd World Congress of the International Federation for Home Economics in July 2012. We extend a warm invitation to all Australian teachers to participate in this global health and wellbeing forum. To submit a presentation proposal or register for this unique event, go to www.ifhe2012.org

A focus of IFHE World Congress 2012 will be on creative and innovative ways to promote home economics. It is clear to the profession that the time is right for speaking up for home economics. We are committed to the belief that this vital multi-disciplined field must be recognised as a key component of Australian school curriculum.

Let's all heed the call for more home economics in Australian schools.

Home Economics Victoria
605/198 Harbour Esplanade
Docklands Vic 3008

www.homeeconomics.com.au
Phone 1300 HOME EC or 03 9642 1061
Email office@hev.com.au



home
economics Victoria