

# SA school period education is about to change

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The Education Department is preparing to change the way period education is delivered in South Australian schools under the new curriculum.

Version 9 of the Australian curriculum was released last year by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA).

Education Department chief executive Martin Westwell said the department was in the process of determining how the curriculum will be implemented in South Australia, and was utilising feedback such as a recent report from Flinders University, as [InDaily reported last week](#).

“We’re adapting the Australian curriculum in some ways where... we don’t think it’s serving South Australian students as well as it might, and this is one of those areas,” Westwell said.

“We’re working on the implementation of the South Australian adaptations to the curriculum now for rollout this year or next year, and in that rollout we’ll make changes to the curriculum, to give advice to educators about where this [period education] is best taught.”

Westwell said he had reached out to the authors of the [Flinders study](#), which found the age of first periods is decreasing, but the age it is taught about is not.

<https://www.indaily.com.au/news/local/2024/02/20/south-australian-period-education-is-about-to-change>

“Because it’s happening earlier that puts a requirement on us to make sure that the curriculum is serving them and that the education about these things occurs earlier,” he said.

“It’s happening to girls’ bodies earlier so the education system should respond to that change.”

Westwell said he has been long aware of the need for change in the area, having attended the first [Youth Period Summit](#) held in Adelaide in July last year.

“I went to that and just listened to what they had to say, and it was really clear that what we’re doing in terms of education for students around menstruation, we’re just not quite getting it right,” he said.

“What the students were saying was... I want to know what’s about to happen to my body. I don’t need teaching [about] what’s just happened to my body, it’s too late then. I need to know beforehand so that I’m ready for it,” he said.

“We’re really thinking hard about making sure that the curriculum serves students... we definitely don’t want students just going through the motions of the curriculum, we really want to make sure that the curriculum is meaningful.”

The sex education system has been [long criticised](#), with the South Australian Commissioner for Children and Young People in 2021 [releasing a report](#) with recommendations for the way menstruation education is delivered.

The report included students saying they wanted to be taught about the day-to-day management of their periods, something Westwell said has been taken on board.

“Really what this is about is health and wellbeing of young people,” he said.

“It’s more about people and their bodies than it is about particular parts of the anatomy or particular physiological processes. Although that’s of course a really important part of it, it’s not limited to that,” he said.

Westwell said he thought societal attitudes were partly to blame for the system having not already been changed.

“I think the conversations we’re having in the community more broadly have changed,” he said.

“This has always been an important thing for us to talk with our girls and our boys about. It’s really important for our male students to understand what happens when their friends, their family, are having their period, to understand the process and what to expect. Also what their role is.”