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Teach about lost kids, MP urges

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WEST Australian Liberal MP and former foster child Steve Irons has urged the Gillard government to delay approval of the history curriculum, saying it is important to properly acknowledge the nation's thousands of children who grew up in care.

Then prime minister Kevin Rudd apologised in 2009 to 50,000 children, including child migrants known as the "Forgotten Australians", who were mis-

treated in institutions and foster homes from the 1920s to the 70s, but their experience is not specifically mentioned in the new curriculum.

"If it's important enough to provide an apology to, it should be important enough to be included in history," Mr Irons said yesterday.

"We shouldn't be afraid of our history. We need to look at it, warts and all.

"This makes us who we are and it is part of our culture."

Mr Irons, who lived in an orphanage with his two siblings for the first three years of his life before being placed with a foster family, said many still felt the effects of growing up in institutions.

His call follows those of former Democrats senator Andrew Murray, who has been a vocal advocate for children mistreated in care, writing to ministers asking them to recognise the plight of Forgotten Australians.

Federal and state education

ministers are due to give final approval to the history curriculum in November pending the tick off by the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority.

All states and territories except Western Australia had agreed to "substantially implement" the curriculum by 2013.

An ACARA spokesman said there was an opportunity in the history curriculum, in a "Year 10 Depth Study", for forgotten Australians to be covered under the "rights and freedoms" section.

The coursework requires students to examine how human rights and freedoms have been ignored in Australia and in the "broader world context".

The content of the national history curriculum has been under fire recently. It has been criticised by the Greens and the National Sorry Day Committee, who say it does not adequately cover the history of indigenous peoples.