

# Council For The National Interest

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Hon Sue Ellery MLC  
Minister for Education and Training  
Leader of the Legislative Council  
Level 13, Dumas House, 2 Havelock Street  
WEST PERTH WA 6005

*Dear Minister Ellery*

Safe Schools Coalition Australia (SSCA) Program  
Building Respectful Relationships Program (BRR)

As I considered your response, dated 1 May 2017, to my letter, dated 21 April 2017, as unacceptable because it did not respond to the issues which I raised, I commissioned further research into these programs.

The SSCA program is promoted as an 'anti-bullying' program designed to stop bullying of so-called Gay/Lesbian/Transgender children in school. It promotes the notion that gender is how a person "feels in their mind" and "some people have a fluid gender – it changes over time."

This notion of gender choice has no basis in science. LaTrobe University research which promotes this notion of gender fluidity is therefore not credible. See Attachment 1 – Gender variety has no basis in science; Attachment 2 – Gender Ideology Harms Children – American College of Pediatricians. This states "People who identify as 'feeling like the opposite sex' or 'somewhere in between' do not comprise a third sex. They remain biological men or biological women." and Attachment 3 – Transgenderism: treat as a mental illness.

Although the La Trobe University research is used to justify funding for the SSCA 'anti bullying' program funded by the Federal Government, the architect and co-founder, Ros Ward, La Trobe University academic is reported as conceding it "...is not about stopping bullying" and "It's about gender and sexual diversity. About same sex attractive, about being transgender etc, etc" See Attachment 4 – Worried over Safe Schools? 'Tough!' Ward also concedes that the SSCA is "part of a broader Marxist strategy to change society." See Attachment 5 - Schools activist attacks Dutton.

It is also reported that Emeritus Professor, Anne Mitchell, described as the research doyenne behind the SSCA program has spoken of "shaping an agenda" and how "early research .....was purposely tied to a disease or public health issue to attract funding..." and further ".....Professor Mitchell also said one of her team's biggest successes was shifting the issue from the moral arena – given some religious schools would have been unlikely to sign on to a program that gave the appearance of supporting homosexuality – to a safety one."

It is also reported that three of the four academics, paid \$270,000 by the Foundation for Young Australians (FYA) to conduct an 'independent' evaluation of the Safe Schools

program, could be judged as biased having written extensively on sex education in schools, in the same vein as supports SSCA and criticizing heteronormativity. One of these academics is Co-Chair of Twenty10, a gay and transgender organization that was promoted in the SSCA material. See Attachment 6 – Safe Schools gay youth co-chair and Attachment 7 - Safe Schools evaluators' 'heteronormative fears.'

There is a report about a video, developed by La Trobe University, that teaches Year 7 and 8 students "You don't have to be a certain way just because you have a penis and you don't have to be a certain way just because you have a vagina. We're not gonna care about that. We're gonna do what we wanna do. We're gonna be who we wanna be." See Attachment 8 – Video urges Students to ignore physical gender. Such advice ignores the scientific facts and is encouraging behaviour consistent with a 'psychological or mental illness.'

The article, "Scepticism as survey doubles same-sex teen attraction" The Weekend Australian March 19-20, 2016 raises very serious questions about the efficacy of the research by La Trobe University's Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society (ARCSHS). See Attachment 9. These questions have not yet been satisfactorily answered.

In addition to the above, there is the Building Respectful Relations (BRR) program, funded on the basis of domestic violence protection and being taught in Victorian schools. This too is the outcome of research by La Trobe University. Ostensibly, a domestic violence program which received Commonwealth Government funding for this purpose, it is actually a program which promotes the sexualisation of children in an extreme way and quite contrary to its stated aim to work against premature sexualisation. Can you please confirm that you have no intention of allowing the BRR program in Western Australian State schools

So much more has been written and spoken in the media about the way the SSCA is being encouraged across the whole curriculum; how children aged 12 and 13 are encouraged to role play inappropriate sexual scenarios and view all forms of sexual activity as acceptable, normal and safe; are encouraged and taught how to access gay websites with links to adult and pornographic sites and how these children are then taught how to hide their web browsing from their parents; how they can learn techniques for breast suppression and penis tucking which can result in long term medical problems including cancer. This is a form of child abuse.

In your response, dated 1 May 2017, you expressed your confidence "...in the professional judgement of our educators in determining the most suitable evidence-based programs for use in our schools."

Our research suggests that your confidence in your educators is misplaced as there are at least 25 Government schools signed up for the SSCA program which is not evidence based nor is it suitable for use in any school. It has no basis in science; it is a charade; it is part of a Marxist program to change Australian society and destroy the concept of the family. Furthermore we note that the State School Teachers' Union (SSTUWA) has promoted Safe Schools Coalition WA (SSCWA) run workshops for teachers in WA. Why should SSTUWA be involved in these teacher workshops and what control do you have over what material SSCWA conveys to teachers at these workshops?

All of the above facts show that SSCA is not evidence based; there is no scientific basis for the concept of gender fluidity; around 98% of gender confused boys and 88% of gender confused girls accept their biological sex after naturally passing through puberty. The SSCA program promotes conditioning children into believing a lifetime of chemical and surgical impersonation of the opposite sex is normal and healthful; this is child abuse.

For these and other reasons other States have withdrawn the SSCA program.

Having regard to the above facts and to your obligation to ensure that education programs do not condone child abuse and teach only factually based curricula, will your Government now withdraw the SSCA program from Government schools in Western Australia? Failure to do so will increase the prospect of taxpayers facing huge costs, at some point in the future, when some adults realize that as immature children, exposure to the SSCA program encouraged them to believe in gender fluidity and change their gender only to experience consequent psychological and physical health problems for the rest of their lives, when the probability is that, left to pass through puberty naturally, they would have accepted their biological sex and been able to live normal lives.

Wouldn't it be better to devote these resources to raising educational standards of achievement and hopefully achieve a much higher ranking than just six Government schools gaining a place in the top 30 Median ATAR 2016 with the highest ranking of 10. Anti bullying programs in schools should not focus on one specific cohort such as gay and lesbian. To do so only exacerbates the issue if there is one. For this reason and based on all of the above the SSCA should be withdrawn.

Instead, every school should accept that all children, adults and parents have the right to be treated with respect and dignity and must be so treated and must accept the responsibility to do so. This can be developed, in every school, in such a way as it becomes part of the ethos of each school.

*Sincerely*

*Denis Whitely*

Denis J Whitely  
Executive Director

# Gender variety has no basis in science

by Terri Kelleher

Gender is fluid. That is what young people are being told in schools.

Safe Schools Coalition/Australia (SSCA) resource booklet "OMG I'm Queer" (on page 7), states categorically: "Sex is your physical aspects (i.e., your wibbly wobbly bits) ... Gender on the other hand is how you feel in your mind.

"Some people have a 'fluid' gender – it changes over time. My friend has warned me not to be surprised if one day she rocks up with a shaved head and asks to be called Bruce. But you know what? That's completely up to her."

Facebook users previously had to identify themselves as male or female, or could keep their gender private. Now 56 gender options are offered and users can select a "custom" gender option

The notion that gender is fluid and that a man can become a woman, or vice versa, by way of surgery and/or hormone treatment, is controversial.

Feminist author and psychologist Laura McNally has commented on the SSCA advocacy of gender fluidity. She wrote on the ABC's Religion and Ethics website: "The idea that gender is a feeling is highly questionable. In fact, the idea of feminine or masculine thinking has long been disputed in the research.

"Many people are indeed diverse and non-conforming, and ending discrimination around difference is worthwhile. But there is no consensus in the research on whether putting children into gender categories is helpful or simply premature and possibly disruptive. Theories about gender are dubious at best."

And genetics tells us otherwise. Dr David Page has discovered that X and Y chromosomes "function throughout

the entire body, not just within the reproductive tract. ... every cell knows it at the molecular level.

"We aren't unisex, and our bodies know this – every cell knows it at the molecular level."

Dr Page explains more in a short but very informative video which can be accessed at <http://tinyurl.com/nmsy393>.

## Greer cops a blast

But saying she didn't think that post-operative transgender men were women brought down the wrath of the gender police like a ton of bricks on expatriate Australian feminist academic and author Germaine Greer. Students at Cardiff University in Wales got up a petition calling for the university to cancel a lecture she was to give there, accusing the famous feminist of spouting hateful and marginalising views of transgender people.

Greer told the BBC: "I'm not saying that people should not be allowed to go through that procedure ... What I'm saying is, it doesn't make them a woman.

"It happens to be an opinion. It's not a prohibition."

American Olympic athlete, Bruce Jenner, on the other hand, has been feted in the media over his transitioning to a woman and changing his name to Caitlyn, being honoured as one of Glamour magazine's Women of the Year in New York recently.

Jenner is reported to have commented on completing his transitioning: "In some ways, it's a little sad. Bruce was a good guy, did a lot of good things, raised a tremendous family and wonderful kids. But I just couldn't play that game any longer.

"I actually cried a little bit about it

... It was very exciting, but such a head trip."

His words read as though Bruce was another person, a person who no longer exists.

What do psychiatrists say about this? Eminent American psychiatrist Paul McHugh has said: "Sex change" is biologically impossible. People who undergo sex-reassignment surgery do not change from men to women or vice versa. Rather, they become feminised men or masculinised women. Claiming that this is civil-rights matter and encouraging surgical intervention is in reality to collaborate with and promote a mental disorder."

Dr Joseph Berger, a specialist in psychiatry at the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada says: "Transgendered" are people who claim that they really are or wish to be people of the sex opposite to which they were born as, or to which their chromosomal configuration attests. ... Scientifically, there is no such a thing. Therefore anyone who actually truly believes that notion, is by definition deluded, psychotic. The medical treatment of delusions or psychosis is not by surgery."

And if they concede that scientifically they cannot change sex but are unhappy with their biological sex and wish to be of the other sex, again: "The proper treatment of emotional unhappiness is not surgery."

## Not in the science

So the answer to the lead question? Does it lie in the science – what genetics tells us? Or in the feelings of the man who feels he is a woman trapped in a man's body? Or does it just depend on from whose perspective you are looking at it? Well, if I am feeling cold when in fact the thermometer says it is 42 degrees in the shade and I continue to turn up the heater and pile on more layers of clothing, then I will in fact eventually die of heat exhaustion.

The feelings of people who are unhappy with their biological sex should not be ignored, but medical or surgical treatment to give them the appearance of the other sex does not seem to be the answer.

NW

# **Gender Ideology Harms Children - American College of Pediatricians**

The American College of Pediatricians urges educators and legislators to reject all policies that condition children to accept as normal a life of chemical and surgical impersonation of the opposite sex. Facts – not ideology – determine reality.

1. Human sexuality is an objective biological binary trait: “XY” and “XX” are genetic markers of health – not genetic markers of a disorder.

The norm for human design is to be conceived either male or female.

Human sexuality is binary by design with the obvious purpose being the reproduction and flourishing of our species.

This principle is self-evident. The exceedingly rare disorders of sexual differentiation (DSDs), including but not limited to testicular feminization and congenital adrenal hyperplasia,

are all medically identifiable deviations from the sexual binary norm, and are rightly recognized as disorders of human design. Individuals with DSDs do not constitute a third sex.

2. No one is born with a gender. Everyone is born with a biological sex.

Gender (an awareness and sense of oneself as male or female) is a sociological and psychological concept; not an objective biological one.

No one is born with an awareness of themselves as male or female; this awareness develops over time and, like all developmental processes,

may be derailed by a child’s subjective perceptions, relationships, and adverse experiences from infancy forward. People who identify as “feeling like the opposite sex” or “somewhere in between” do not comprise a third sex.

They remain biological men or biological women.

3. A person’s belief that he or she is something they are not is, at best, a sign of confused thinking.

When an otherwise healthy biological boy believes he is a girl, or an otherwise healthy biological girl believes she is a boy, an objective psychological problem exists that lies in the mind not the body, and it should be treated as such.

These children suffer from gender dysphoria.

Gender dysphoria (GD), formerly listed as Gender Identity Disorder (GID), is a recognized mental disorder in the most recent edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of the American Psychiatric Association (DSM-V)

**The psychodynamic and social learning theories of GD/GID have never been disproved.**

**4. Puberty is not a disease and puberty-blocking hormones can be dangerous.**

**Reversible or not, puberty- blocking hormones induce a state of disease – the absence of puberty – and inhibit growth and fertility in a previously biologically healthy child.**

**5. According to the DSM-V, as many as 98% of gender confused boys and 88% of gender confused girls eventually accept their biological sex after naturally passing through puberty.**

**6. Children who use puberty blockers to impersonate the opposite sex will require cross-sex hormones in late adolescence.**

**Cross-sex hormones are associated with dangerous health risks including but not limited to high blood pressure, blood clots, stroke and cancer.**

**7. Rates of suicide are twenty times greater among adults who use cross-sex hormones and undergo sex reassignment surgery, even in Sweden which is among the most LGBTQ – affirming countries.**

**What compassionate and reasonable person would condemn young children to this fate knowing that after puberty as many as 88% of girls and 98% of boys will eventually accept reality and achieve a state of mental and physical health?**

**8. Conditioning children into believing a lifetime of chemical and surgical impersonation of the opposite sex is normal and healthful is child abuse.**

**Endorsing gender discordance as normal via public education and legal policies will confuse children and parents, leading more children to present to “gender clinics” where they will be given puberty-blocking drugs.**

**This, in turn, virtually ensures that they will “choose” a lifetime of carcinogenic and otherwise toxic cross-sex hormones, and likely consider unnecessary surgical mutilation of their healthy body parts as young adults.**

**Michelle A. Cretella, M.D.**

**President of the American College of Pediatricians**

**Quentin Van Meter, M.D.**

**Vice President of the American College of Pediatricians**

**Pediatric Endocrinologist**

**Paul McHugh, M.D.**

**University Distinguished Service Professor of Psychiatry at Johns Hopkins Medical School and the former psychiatrist in chief at Johns Hopkins Hospital**

# Transgenderism: treat it as a mental illness

by a News Weekly contributor

The treatment of young people changing their gender is presented as normative by the Safe Schools Coalition Australian program. Even some primary schools are announcing that children are "transgendering" to another sex. So, what is and how safe is transgendering? This article summarises the advice of experts in the medical profession who deal with transgender issues.

People who identify as transgender experience a mismatch between the sex they were born with, and their gender identity. This includes genderqueer people, whose identities are not exclusively masculine or feminine, but may, for example, be bigender (experiencing two gender identities), pangender (a wide multiplicity of gender identities), genderfluid (fluctuating between gender identities), or agender (without gender).

Psychiatrist John F. Oliven of Columbia University coined the term transgender in his 1965 reference work, *Sexual Hygiene and Pathology*, replacing the term transsexual, which had been introduced in 1949 by surgeon and neuro-psychiatrist David Oliver Cauldwell. Cauldwell distinguished "biological sex" from "psychological sex", and saw the latter as determined by social conditioning. He regarded sex reassignment surgery as an unacceptable response to transsexualism, and instead advocated that it be treated as a mental disorder.

Transgenderism is also known as gender dysphoria or gender identity disorder (GID). The various levels of transgender manifestation include dressing as the opposite sex, receiving hormonal treatment, or undergoing sex-change surgery.

The Nottingham Centre for Gender Dysphoria found in a study that

transgenders have high levels of mental-health problems including depression, resulting in increased levels of self-injury and suicidal ideation.

Walt Heyer, who was a married father of two when he underwent a sex change operation at the age of 42, states today: "Gender change is at its heart a self-destructive act. Transgenders not only annihilate their birth identity, they destroy everyone and everything in their wake: family, wife, children, brothers or sisters, and career."

He came to realise that his desire to change genders stemmed from deep-rooted childhood trauma, rather than a genetic disorder, and had his surgery reversed eight years later. His correspondence with several other people who had undergone and subsequently regretted sex-change surgery revealed the main trigger of their gender dysphoria to be abusive childhood environments.

A Finnish study, published in April 2015 in the journal *Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Mental Health*, found that girls with gender dysphoria have many other mental-health issues; autism spectrum problems were very common. The researchers stated: "In the majority of the applicants, gender dysphoria presented in the context of wider identity confusion, severe psychopathology and considerable challenges in the adolescent development."

They concluded: "In the presence of severe psychopathology and developmental difficulties, medical [sex-reassignment] treatments may not be currently advisable."

In conclusion, the best medical experts on this issue, as well as people like Walt Heyer, strongly state that those who identify as transgender need counselling and therapy, not sex-reassignment surgery. Schools are not experts in psychology; some children who claim to be transgendered have serious underlying issues that are best resolved through psychological treatment.

Due to space constraints, we offer here a greatly edited version of this story. To read the entire story, with footnotes, go online to [www.newsweekly.com.au](http://www.newsweekly.com.au).

NW

## STOP PRESS: Revelations in Parliament

Mr CHRISTENSEN (Dawson — The Nationals Deputy Whip (13.50): The genesis, research, advocacy and ongoing support for the Safe Schools program is run by La Trobe University's Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society. In fact, the Safe Schools Coalition is run out of that La Trobe centre.

Research by the Australian Family Association raised concerns about the centre's deputy director, Gary Dowsett, a long-time advocate of "intergenerational sex", otherwise known as paedophilia. I refer to Dowsett's article, "Boiled lollies and Band-aids" from the journal *Gay Information*, where he says: "How different, then, is that gentle, tentative sexuality between parent and child from the love of a paedophile and his or her lover? That kind of love, warmth, support and nurture is an important part of the paedophilic relationship." He argued in that journal article that paedophilia should be part of the gay movement and that it must be legally recognised, and he depicted it as a part of a wider sexual liberation.

From 2000 to 2002, Dowsett was on the Victorian government's ministerial advisory committee on gay and lesbian health, putting him in a powerful position to advocate for the Victorian precursor program to Safe Schools. During the lead-up to Safe Schools receiving \$8 million in taxpayer funds from Labor, Dowsett was the acting director of the La Trobe centre. I think it would shock many parents to know that a paedophilia advocate was overseeing the organisation that came up with the Safe Schools program. Given this shocking information, it is imperative that all federal funding to Safe Schools be suspended immediately pending a full parliamentary inquiry. I seek leave to table Dowsett's article.

(Leave not granted.)

The above comments were delivered by George Christensen in Federal Parliament on March 16, 2016, and are published here under parliamentary privilege.

# Worried over Safe Schools? 'Tough!'

## EXCLUSIVE

REBECCA URBAN  
EDUCATION

Safe Schools operatives have been coaching educators to dismiss parental concerns over the contentious sex and gender-diversity program, asserting that parents are powerless to shut it down.

A Safe Schools national symposium was told by the program's Victorian co-ordinator, Roz Ward, that schools could ignore concerns raised about the agenda.

"When people do complain then school leadership can very calmly and graciously say, 'You know what? We're doing it anyway, tough luck!'" she told more than 300 attendees.

Leaked video footage from the event, which emerged at the weekend, also appears to confirm what critics of the program have long suspected: that it was more about promoting radical political ideas around sexuality and gender than preventing schoolyard bullying.

"(It's) not about celebrating diversity; not about stopping bullying," Ms Ward said.

"(It's) about gender and sexual diversity. About same-sex attractive, about being transgender, about being lesbian, gay, bisexual — say the words — transgender, intersex. Not just, 'Be nice to everyone; everyone's great'."

Safe Schools project manager Joel Radcliffe, a fellow academic at La Trobe University, which spawned the program, told the audience that the issue of parental concern came up a lot when schools were considering whether to join the program.

"Parents ... seem to have a lot of power (in) schools," he said. "Parents don't have the power to shut this down."

The emergence of the video, which was shot in Melbourne in June 2014, follows the federal government's decision on Friday to overhaul the taxpayer-funded program in light of an independent review.

Elements of the program, including homosexual role-play and asking students to consider gender as a fluid concept unaligned with sex at birth, have alarmed some parents.

Education Minister Simon Birmingham has ordered organisers to curb their classroom campaign or lose their remaining \$2 million in funding.

"Just as proselytising is not part of the school chaplaincy program, advocacy must not be part of the Safe Schools program," Senator Birmingham said last week.

The Victorian government, which is pushing for the compulsory roll out of the program over the next few years, has said it will pick up the bill if the funding is cut, arguing that the program "saves lives".

Launched in 2010, the program claims to be dedicated to creating "safe and inclusive" learning spaces for same-sex attracted, intersex and gender-diverse students.

It was created off the back of a campaign by the La Trobe University to elevate the interests of same-sex attracted youth in schools.

FamilyVoice Australia national research officer Ros Phillips said the video showed that the program was about pushing "rainbow ideology" not stopping bullying.

Ms Phillips said the organisation had received feedback from a significant number of parents who had been rebuffed when raising their concerns with principals.

A spokeswoman for the Safe Schools Coalition said the program aimed to reduce homophobic and transphobic bullying and discrimination in schools.



The Australian March 1, 2016

# Schools activist attacks Dutton

EXCLUSIVE

REBECCA URBAN  
ANDREW BURRELL

The architect behind a contentious sexual diversity program set to become mandatory across all Victorian schools is an outspoken hard-left warrior who has publicly denounced Immigration Minister Peter Dutton as a "sexist prick".

Safe Schools Coalition Victoria co-founder Roz Ward has also conceded the Safe Schools Coalition program is part of a broad Marxist strategy to change society.

Ms Ward is a La Trobe University academic who moonlights as a writer for *Red Flag*, the publication of the Socialist Alternative, a Trotskyite self-described Marxist organisation that has become a dominant force among university radicals and the broad-left activist movement.

Ms Ward's recent contributions include an article published in January, titled "Sexist text messages are the least of Peter Dutton's crimes", in which she



Safe Schools Coalition architect Roz Ward with Victorian Education Minister James Merino at the Pride march

accuses the minister of being responsible for instances of sexual abuse being experienced by refugees at the Nauru processing centre.

"Dutton is responsible for these horrors," she writes. "Sure, call out casual sexism, but we should rage longer and harder against his ongoing crimes against refugees."

In another article, Ms Ward accused the Liberals of turning train stations into prisons after the introduction of a safety policy in 2012 of manning platforms

with armed guards. She denounced the guards, known as "protective services officers", as "uniformed thugs".

The program has recently been linked with an improved public perception of safety.

A prominent campaigner on gay, lesbian and transgender issues including marriage equality, Ms Ward has repeatedly claimed that the Safe Schools Coalition was derived out of a bid

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## Schools activist attacks Dutton

*Continued from Page 1*

to stamp out homophobia within schools.

Victorian Education Minister James Merino, who posed for photographs with Ward at the recent Pride March, declined a request for an interview yesterday.

However in a statement, his spokesman said that the "scare campaign" being run by opponents of Safe Schools Coalition has been "nothing short of disgraceful".

"The comments from federal MPs like Cory Bernardi and George Christensen are perfect examples of the kind of attitudes that we need to change," he said.

The Victorian government was the first to provide public funds to the cause. Former Labor education minister Bronwyn Pike, who has an openly gay son, announced \$80,000 in seed funding in October 2010. A year later, the newly elected Coalition government announced further funding of \$416,000 and the federal Labor government then lent its support in 2013 when senator Penny Wong, who is gay, unveiled \$8 million over four years to "help stop homophobia and create more inclusive school communities".

The Safe Schools Coalition program has since been rolled out to more than 500 schools and has the backing of the Australian Secondary Principals Association and the Australian Education Union.

Despite the program's stated aims, its politically-correct approach to sex education — under which teachers are counselled that it is "heterosexual" to refer to students as "girls and boys" and children are instructed to role-play gay teenagers — has outraged religious groups and conservative politicians.

Many have questioned whether it is appropriate for schools to be teaching children as young as 11 the meaning of terms such as "queer", "pansexual", "sister girl" and "trans guy".

The Coalition's website also lists more than 40 primary schools or P-12 colleges that have registered.

One of those, St Kilda Primary School in Melbourne, took part in the Midsunna Festival's annual Pride March in January alongside the Safe Schools Coalition.

Ms Ward, who manages the program in Victoria, wrote about the landmark occasion, on the coalition's website.

"For the first time ever we marched with a primary school as well as more than a dozen secondary schools, which just really shows the progress that has been made," she wrote.

St Kilda Primary School principal Sue Higgins confirmed that the school had taken part, but did not respond to further questions via email, including whether students had taken part.

West Australian Education Minister Peter Collier has raised concerns, describing aspects of it as "almost offensive".

A former high school teacher, he said it could hurt the children it aimed to protect, although it had the hallmarks of an effective bullying strategy.

"I cannot see or fathom any situation where drawing attention to a particular set of students is going to necessarily assist that child," Mr Collier said.

"I feel as soon as you start to identify or isolate very discrete elements of student cohorts, inevitably you're going to draw attention to those students and if anything it could work in reverse." He said only 16 of the state's 800 public schools had registered for the program.

# Safe Schools judge gay youth co-chair

## EXCLUSIVE

GREG BROWN

An academic paid with government money to independently evaluate the controversial Safe Schools Coalition anti-bullying program is the co-chair of a gay and transgender organisation that was promoted in the school material.

University of Sydney academic Cristyn Davies is one of the researchers undertaking a \$270,000 evaluation of the program.

She is also the co-chair of Twenty10, a counselling service for young gay and transgender people.

Access to the Twenty10 service was promoted on the Safe Schools materials through the All of Us resource.

**'I provide service to the community in my area of expertise'**

CRISTYN DAVIES  
UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY  
ACADEMIC

Liberal MP George Christensen, who is hostile towards Safe Schools, this month said in parliament that one of the biggest concerns he had with the program was the links to outside resources such as Twenty10.

"The safe Schools All of Us teaching resource directs students to the LGBT organisation Twenty10. On the 19th of January this year, Twenty10 held a hands-on workshop for youth on sex toys and sadomasochistic practices," Mr Christensen said.

Professor Davies yesterday rejected the suggestion of a conflict of interest.

"As part of university expectations of research staff, I provide service to the community in my area of expertise. In this capacity, I serve as co-chair of the board at Twenty10. This is an honorary

unpaid position. My role with Twenty10 is on the public record," Professor Davies said.

The Australian this week revealed that three of the four Sydney-based academics commissioned to independently evaluate Safe Schools had a history of advocating against "heteronormative" sex education in schools.

Heteronormative sex education is the teaching of heterosexuality as the regular form of sexuality.

The Safe Schools Coalition, ostensibly an anti-bullying program based around gay and transgender issues, has been overhauled by the federal government over concerns it pushes a leftist ideological agenda.

The Gillard government agreed to contribute \$8 million on the rollout of the program through schools, handled by a government-funded lobby Foundation for Young Australians.

The government mandated that FYA commission an independent evaluation of the campaign as a condition of funding.

While the federal government has done its own revision and is likely to pull funding after 2017, the independent evaluation, due later this year, might still impact the content of Safe Schools, as it will be compulsory in Victorian state schools by 2018.

The evaluation was last year outsourced to Western Sydney academics Kerry Robinson and Jacqueline Ullman and University of Sydney academics Davies and Rachel Skinner after a competitive tender.

Three of those authors — professors Robinson, Ullman and Davies — have written extensively of the need to overhaul the teaching of sex education to touch on issues of sexuality and gender in line with what eventually became Safe Schools.

Professors Davies and Robinson have written essays and co-edited a book.

Professor Robinson co-authored an essay, *Growing Up Queer* in 2014, which was co-sponsored by Twenty10.

*T Am published Australian  
March 26-27, 2016*

The Australian March 23, 2016

## Safe School evaluators' 'heteronormative' fears

### EXCLUSIVE

GREG BROWN

A government-funded youth lobby that oversaw the implementation of the Safe Schools Coalition paid nearly \$300,000 for a review into the program with a research team dominated by academics with a history of advocating against "heteronormative" sex education in schools.

The Foundation of Young Australians, which co-developed Safe Schools, gave a \$270,000 research grant to four Sydney-based academics to evaluate the program, with three of them arguing in various essays for the overhauling of sex education to promote teachings of fluidity in gender and diversity in sexual orientation.

The FYA derives 35 per cent of regular income from the federal and Victorian governments. The federal government paid FYA to roll out the \$8 million Safe Schools program nationally as part of its agreement to part-fund it until next year.

FYA was required to have the Safe Schools program independently evaluated as a condition for the federal funding.

The evaluation was last year commissioned to Western Sydney academics Kerry Robinson and Jacqueline Ullman and University of Sydney academics Cristyn Davies and Rachel Skinner after a competitive tender.

Three of those authors — Professor Robinson, Professor Ullman and Professor Davies — have written extensively of the

need to overhaul the teaching of sex education to touch on issues of sexuality and gender in line with what eventually became Safe Schools.

Heteronormative sex education is the promotion of heterosexuality as the regular form of sexuality.

Professor Skinner specialises on the more pragmatic aspects of adolescent sexual and reproductive health, including teenage pregnancy and condom use. Professor Robinson and Professor Davies in 2008 wrote an essay criticising sex education for focusing on the biological aspects of sex without teaching notions of sexuality.

The essay, *Docile Bodies and Heteronormative Moral Subjects*, goes on to say that this teaching "naturalises heterosexuality as the normative form of sexuality thereby reinforcing students' heteronormativity".

"Despite the hegemonic discourse that sexuality is irrelevant to children, schooling cultures and official educational documents consistently construct children as heteronormative subjects with heterosexual futures, even when sexual knowledge is absent in the curriculums," the essay said.

"We view childhood and sexuality largely as social constructions to which schooling makes a significant contribution."

A joint statement by the researchers at Western Sydney University and the University of Sydney said they were from a "broad field of disciplines" and the findings would be "independent and 'objective'".

"The evaluation is being subjected to the highest scientific rigour," it said.

The Weekend Australian February 27-28, 2016

## Video urges students to ignore physical gender

### EXCLUSIVE

RACHEL BAXENDALE  
GEOFF CHAMBERS

A new taxpayer-funded anti-bullying video that encourages Year 7 and 8 students across Australia to forget they have penises and vaginas and focus on their individuality has been savaged by education experts.

The La Trobe University video — entitled *Freedom Fighters* and invoking the 1995 Mel Gibson film *Braveheart* — is part of a commonwealth-funded lesson plan by the creators of the contro-

versial Safe Schools Coalition sexual diversity program.

It depicts a scenario in which Martians invade and enforce a strict male-female division.

Channelling Mel Gibson's William Wallace, "non-binary" male and female characters urge students to fight back.

"You don't have to be a certain way just because you have a penis," they say. "You don't have to be a certain way just because you have a vagina."

"We're not gonna care about that. We're gonna do what we wanna do. We're gonna be who we wanna be."

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The video is part of an online resource called the Practical Guide to Love, Sex and Relationships, which was created by La Trobe University's Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society.

Australian Catholic University senior research fellow Kevin Donnelly, who taught English to Year 7-12 students for 18 years, said he doubted students would take the content seriously.

Contrary to its stated aim of mitigating bullying of students who did not feel they belonged to a particular gender, the video risked increasing misunderstanding and confusion, he said.

"It would be laughed out of the classroom," said Dr Donnelly, who co-chaired the recent review of the Australian national curriculum.

"It presents a very simplistic view of gender and in many ways the scenario is so unbelievable that it's farcical. My view would be that adolescent students would find it difficult to understand and would not be able to believe it was credible or believable because it's such a wacky situation and so contrived that they would probably see it as a farce."

The research centre produced the Safe Schools Coalition sexual diversity program, which is under a Turnbull government review.

ARCSHS founding member and co-writer of the guide Annie Mitchell said it was produced independently of Safe Schools and

was designed to support the new health and physical education curriculum. It's a very sex-positive program. Professor Mitchell said. "It's relationships-based and designed to try to give encouragement to students to understand consent and the capacity for sex to be a good, enjoyable thing."

The professionally illustrated and produced video is voiced by comedian and sometime ABC *Spicks and Specks* host Josh Earl and actress Laura Davies.

The online video is open for use at public and private schools across Australia but it is unclear how many schools will have taken up the program, which was only launched this month.

Debate over the Safe Schools Coalition continued to rage yesterday as Australia's biggest support network for gay, lesbian and trans youth accused Coalition MP George Christensen of "exaggerating" the impact of links appearing on its website connecting kids with sex shops.

Mr Christensen accused Safe Schools and its partners of "grooming" children by providing links to sex-advice websites.

Minus18, Foundation, chief executive Micah Scott, co-author of the recent "All of Us" education resource released by the Safe Schools Coalition, would not commit to removing the links from its website. It emerged yesterday that one of the links to the Tool Shed sex shop, had been removed by Minus18. The Minus18 website, funded by the Victorian government, features a similar

itled "Cover your Tracks", which provides technical advice on removing internet searches.

Mr Scott, who oversees a database of more than 5000 "same-sex-attracted and gender-diverse youth" from across the country, defended offering youth advice on how to erase web searches. "Many of the young people we work with risk being kicked out of home for being LGBTI," he said. "For these youth, getting information online in private is a matter of safety."

### 'It would be laughed out of the classroom'

KEVIN DONNELLY  
EDUCATION RESEARCHER

"George Christensen's comments rely on misinformation and exaggeration to spread fear. He misrepresents the nature of content, even citing publicly available YouTube content as 'R-rated'."

A Safe Schools Coalition spokeswoman said the All of Us resource was compiled by teachers, a curriculum consultant and Minus18. "Their expertise helped ensure the resource was relevant and engaging for young people and we are very proud to work with them," she said.

The spokeswoman said the Safe Schools Coalition would not "direct or influence any of the independent organisations" as

regards removing links from their websites.

LGBTI advocate and former military officer Cate McGregor said there was "legitimate controversy" involving the Safe Schools program. Ms McGregor, who spoke against bullying of trans and LGBT kids, said some of material being discussed in relation to the program was of "concern".

"I'm worried that some of the material did give the Christian lobby ammunition with which to galvanise a fear campaign," Ms McGregor said.

Malcolm Turnbull this week ordered a review into the Safe Schools program, which receives \$8 million in taxpayer funds under a four-year contract approved by Labor. The review — to be led by professors Bill Louden and Donna Cross — will focus on whether the program is age-appropriate, educationally sound and aligned to the national curriculum.

The Prime Minister yesterday urged MPs to use "very measured language" and to consider the impact of their words on young people. "The strength of our society is based on mutual respect and that is something that must be extended to all of our children and indeed all Australians," he said.

### SEARCH

... for Kevin Donnelly's article on the Safe Schools Coalition material on the web edition

# Survey doubles teen attraction

## Scepticism as survey doubles teen same-sex attraction

### EXCLUSIVE

REBECCA URBAN

Sex education in schools is being dictated by activist-driven research projects aligned to gay and lesbian groups, resulting in the significant overstatement of the rates of same-sex attraction among young people and questionable claims about the degree of homophobia in the schoolyard.

The latest National Survey of Australian Secondary Students and Sexual Health, conducted by La Trobe University's Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, claims that 16.8 per cent of 16-19-year-olds reported being attracted to the same sex.

The ARCSHS figure is more than double that cited in earlier

incarnations of the report and more than four times higher than the number of same-sex attracted people identified in the 2013 Australian Study of Health Relationships, the nation's most comprehensive study of sex and relationships.

That study, which polled more than 20,000 people aged 16-69, reports that 3.3 per cent of men and 3.6 per cent of women describe themselves as being gay or bisexual.

The ARCSHS is the same group that spawned the Safe Schools program, which will be overhauled by the Turnbull government.

The large variations in the reported rates of same-sex attraction have attracted growing scepticism.

The quality of the research that has been widely used to lobby governments and educators to overhaul sex education has come under fire from University of Sydney health sciences academic

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James Athanasou, who conducted an independent assessment of the ARCSHS's most recent study into the sexual health and wellbeing of same-sex-attracted young people.

According to Professor Athanasou, a former lecturer in measurement and evaluation, the Writing Themselves In 3 study suffered from "major shortcomings". It found that 66 per cent of same-sex-attracted and gender-questioning youth had experienced some form of abuse or homophobia, with 80 per cent of instances occurring at school.

In a report seen by *The Weekend Australian*, Dr Athanasou raises concerns that the sample group could not be considered representative of the broader same-sex-attracted population as participants were required to self-select.

This, combined with the absence of a control group, "limits the potential value of the findings" and "paints quite a one-sided and incomplete picture".

He also questions some findings regarding participants' experiences of abuse and homophobia, noting that bullying behaviours were studied in isolation from other features of bullying at schools, such as the experiences of heterosexual students.

"These figures have been taken by others and used in social programs and policies, which should never have been done," Dr Athanasou told *The Australian*.

"You would never see this in medicine or other scientific fields."

Leading education expert Kevin Donnelly said he'd long queried the statistics relied upon by the promoters of the Safe Schools Coalition, which has been used in 500 schools across the country.

"Safe Schools refers to 10 per cent being same-sex-attracted, and a further 4 per cent gender diverse or trans (sexual) and 1.7 per cent intersex, so that's 16 per cent,"

he said. "Now I just don't believe that I think they overstate that figure to make the situation look worse."

Writing Themselves In 3, which is authored by Lynne Hillier and colleagues at the ARCSHS, is the third report in a series that has been used Australia-wide to inform government policy and curriculum development. It is currently listed as a resource on the NSW Department of Education and Communities website.

Also listed on the website is the fifth National Survey of Australian Secondary Students and Sexual Health, released in 2014, which

## It 'paints quite a one-sided and incomplete picture'

JAMES ATHANASOU  
UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY

bills itself as a comprehensive study of 400 schools and more than 2000 students, presenting "an accurate picture of the sexual attitudes, knowledge and experiences of Australian young people".

Yet analysis of the methodology shows that 36 per cent of the participants were recruited with the help of a leading advocate for same-sex attracted and transgender issues.

Having struggled to recruit through schools — just 26 of the 729 schools canvassed ultimately participated — researchers turned to Micah Scott, the head of youth-led organisation for same-sex attracted and gender diverse young people Minus 18 and a co-author on several Safe Schools Coalition education materials, to help with online recruitment.

The report acknowledges the impact that the online recruitment had on bolstering the numbers of same-sex-attracted participants, who are known to be frequent users of the websites that advertised the survey.

Despite its limitations, the study is routinely cited by the Safe Schools Coalition when it claims that 10 per cent of students are same-sex-attracted; a figure not supported in the research. Nor is the claim supported in the two previous secondary school surveys.

The 2008 survey reports 6.7 per cent of participants identified as same-sex-attracted, including bisexual, while the 2002 survey had the figure at 5.2 per cent.

Previous research that tried to measure the number of same-sex-attracted youth in the community included a 1996 study by Dr Hillier, involving 1200 rural high school students, in which it has frequently been claimed that 11 per cent were same-sex-attracted.

A closer look at the report, *The Rural Mural: Sexuality and Diversity in Rural Youth*, reveals that 3 per cent were attracted only to people of the same sex, 2 per cent were attracted to both sexes, while 6 per cent of respondents, some as young as 12, were unsure of their sexual orientation.

A spokeswoman for La Trobe University said many studies had shown a proportion of young people reported that they were not exclusively attracted to the opposite sex and those estimates varied due to different sampling techniques.

"However, there has been a trend over the past three surveys of the Secondary Students and Sexual Health studies ... that the percentage of secondary students who report they are not exclusively attracted to the opposite sex has increased in the previous decade," the spokeswoman said.

"Writing Themselves In uses a sample which gathers both quantitative and qualitative data about the lives of same-sex-attracted young people. It has consistently found that school was a major source of bullying for (them)."

Dr Hillier and Ms Mitchell declined to comment. A spokeswoman for Safe Schools did not respond to a request for comment.

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