

Open Letter to Prime Minister Tony Abbott on the Safe Schools Coalition Australia program

Dear Mr Abbott,

We deplore all forms of school bullying. But we are deeply concerned about the controversial Safe Schools Coalition Australia (SSCA) program, launched on 13 June 2014 for use by schools throughout Australia.

This program claims to be an anti-bullying program, to make “schools safer and more inclusive”.¹ However, it does not address the problems experienced by the vast majority of school children who are regularly bullied because of their body shape or size, school grades, race or ethnic background, religious beliefs or family income – as shown by a study of 105,000 students.²

The SSCA program focuses only on the small minority of “same sex attracted, intersex and gender diverse young people”.³ It provides free resources, but only to help staff respond to “homophobia and transphobia”, and to support and celebrate “gender and sexual diversity”.⁴ Yet sexual orientation does not even rate among the top seven causes of bullying.⁵

The term *homophobia* literally means “an extreme, irrational fear of homosexuality” but it is used to abuse and intimidate anyone who believes, with good evidence, that homosexual conduct carries serious health and other risks. For good reasons, the style book of Associated Press has told journalists to stop using the term.⁶

The term *transphobia* is equally misused. A boy who feels like a girl is suffering from gender dysphoria (or confusion). It is a complex condition, and schools need great care in dealing with the tiny percentage of students who identify in this way. The condition is analogous to anorexia, when a dangerously thin child feels fat. Such children need compassion, but not reinforcement of their confusion. Hormone treatment and surgery can change a person’s appearance but cannot change their biological sex.

In reality, the program is thinly disguised propaganda to normalise homosexual behaviour and cross dressing among students at an age when some may be confused about their identity. It inappropriately sexualises the classroom. By encouraging students to “come out” as gay, lesbian or transgender, the program exposes students to serious physical and psychological health risks. Encouraging confused boys to use girls’ toilets and change rooms (and vice versa) is inappropriate and could lead to problems with sexual harrasment.⁷

Federal funding for the program of \$8 million over four years was authorised by the previous Labor government, at the initiative of Senator Penny Wong.

In Victoria, where the program was first developed with funding from the previous Labor government, some high school students were told that they can find out if they are “gay” by “trying it”.⁸

In New South Wales, the “Proud Schools” pilot program (similar to the Safe Schools Coalition program) resulted in reverse bullying in Burwood Girls High School. When students were pressured to support same-sex “marriage” by signing a mural, girls who wanted to uphold true marriage – as the union of a man and a woman – were abused and bullied.⁹

Puberty is an emotional time for many students who are still developing their sense of identity, and focusing attention on homosexuality is unhelpful at this time. Most teens who experience same-sex attraction become opposite-sex attracted in adulthood.^{10,11,12} They should not be falsely led to believe that their adolescent attractions are necessarily fixed and permanent. Students with current same-sex attractions should not be encouraged to embrace activity linked with serious health risks.¹³

All students deserve a safe school environment, but the Safe Schools Coalition program is not the way to achieve it. Emphasising homosexual bullying tells other bullied students that the reasons they are mocked or abused are not as important, deepening their sense of injustice and despair. School communities should foster courtesy and respect for all other students, not just some.

This year, \$2 million has already been paid to the Safe Schools Coalition Australia for its dangerous program. Please cancel the remaining funding and instead support programs that address school bullying more generally.

SIGNATURE/S:

NAME/S (block capitals: Title (eg Mr/Mrs etc), First Name and Last Name):
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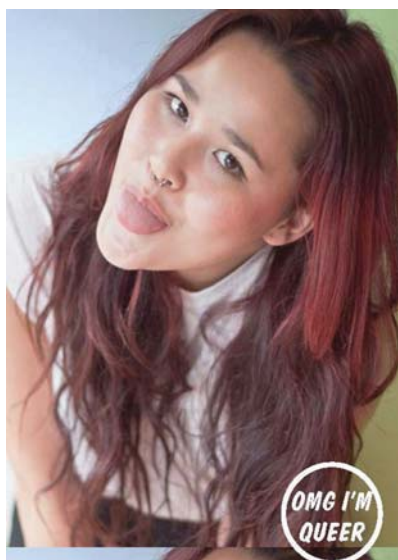
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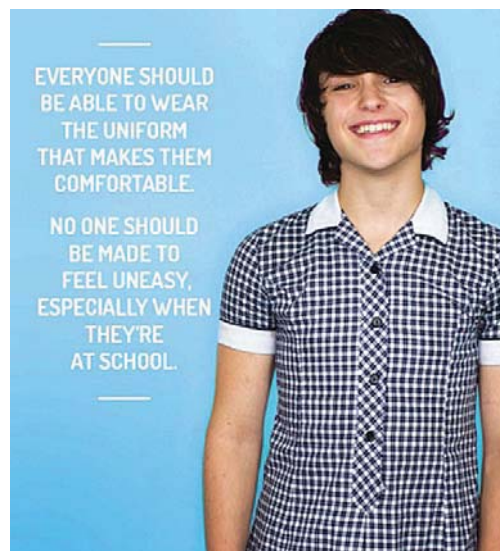
**Please return to: FamilyVoice Australia, 4th Floor, 68 Grenfell St, Adelaide SA 5000 (action@fava.org.au)
by 27 February 2015**

The Safe Schools Coalition program - coming to a school near you?



This booklet for 'Safe Schools' students tells them how to 'do' homosexual sex – when they feel ready, no minimum age

This Safe Schools Coalition poster (shown in part) promotes a boy wearing a dress

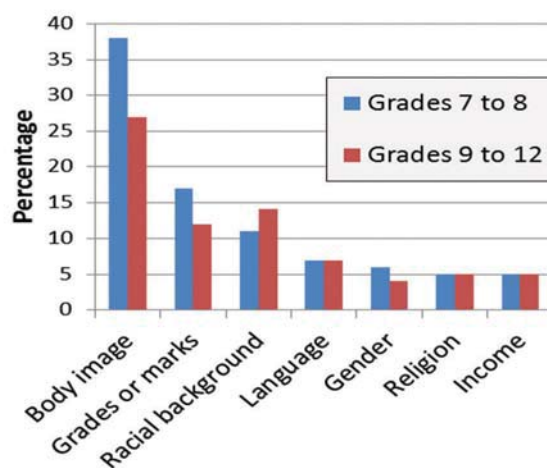


The NSW Proud Schools program (similar to SSCA) promoted same-sex “marriage” via a mural — students who didn’t support it were bullied



Note: the “gender” category refers to being a boy or girl, not to gender dysphoria (confusion about gender identity)

Reasons for being bullied



The Safe Schools Coalition program ignores the main reasons for school bullying

References

1. Who we are - Safe Schools Coalition Australia - FYA: www.safeschoolscoalition.org.au/who-we-are
2. Maria Yau & Janet O'Reilly, “2006 Student Census, Grades 7-12: System Overview,” *Toronto District School Board Research Report*, p 21 (Reasons for Being Bullied - Grade 7-8 [9-12]: Body image 38% [27%], Grades or marks 17% [12%], Cultural or racial background 11% [14%], Language 7% [7%], Gender 6% [4%], Religion 5% [5%], Income 5% [5%]): www.tdsb.on.ca/Portals/0/AboutUs/Research/2006StudentCensusSystemOverview1.pdf
3. Who we are - Safe Schools Coalition Australia - FYA.
4. What we do - Safe Schools Coalition Australia - FYA: www.safeschoolscoalition.org.au/what-we-do
5. Maria Yau & Janet O'Reilly, “2006 Student Census, Grades 7-12: System Overview”.
6. Peter Saunders, “The Associated Press drops the term ‘homophobia’ from its Stylebook”, *LifeSiteNews*, 4 Dec 2012: www.lifesitenews.com/blogs/journalists-told-to-stop-using-the-term-homophobia
7. Alec Torres, “Girls Allegedly Harassed by Transgender Student In Bathroom, Threatened with ‘Hate Crime’ Charges if They Complain”, *National Review Online*, 15 October 2013: www.nationalreview.com/corner/361317/girls-allegedly-harassed-transgender-student-bathroom-threatened-hate-crime-charges-if
8. Private communication from an adult who was present when the advice was given.
9. Private communication from a family member of one of the bullied students.
10. Sexual attraction is particularly unstable in adolescents. Authoritative US¹⁰ and NZ¹¹ studies indicate that between the ages of 16 and 26 some 80% of same-sex attracted boys and girls become opposite-sex attracted as adults. The common claim that sexual attraction is unchangeable is a myth.
11. Ritch C Savin-Williams and Geoffrey L Ream, “Prevalence and stability of sexual orientation components during adolescence and young adulthood”, *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, Vol. 36, Issue 3, June 2007, pp 385-394: <http://psycnet.apa.org/psycinfo/2008-00093-007>
12. N Dickson, C Paul and P Herbison, “Same-sex attraction in a birth cohort: Prevalence and persistence in early adulthood”, *Social Science & Medicine*, Vol. 56, April 2003, pp 1607–1615: www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/12639578
13. Phillips, Roslyn, “Homosexuality: the health risks”, *VoxBrief*, Aug 2012, pp A-D: www.fava.org.au