

Parliament of NSW - Committee on Children and Young People

Inquiry into Sexualisation of Children and Young People - Supplementary Questions

1. What are the negative effects or harms of sexualisation on children and young people?

Some negative effects or harms of sexualisation are:

- **Early sexual initiation.** For girls especially the earlier she begins sexual activity, the greater the number of non-marital sex partners she is likely to have over the course of her life which has been linked to “ ... a wide variety of negative life outcomes, including increased rates of infection with sexually transmitted diseases, increased rates of out-of-wedlock pregnancy and birth, increased single parenthood, decreased marital stability, increased maternal and child poverty, increased abortion, increased depression, and decreased happiness.”¹

Research has shown strong links between early sexual initiation and self-harm and suicide-related behaviour.²

Social science research over the decades suggests that parents can play a protective role in delaying early teen sexual activity and reducing the risk of harmful consequences. Studies have demonstrated a correlation between parental values on teen sex and teen sexual behaviour.^{3 4 5 6 7 8}

SSCA, in presenting students with ways to deceive or keep from their parents that they are seeking information about sex and accessing that information online and advising

1 http://s3.amazonaws.com/thf_media/2003/pdf/Bookofcharts.pdf

2 Wichstrøm L., Hegna K., “Sexual orientation and suicide attempt: A longitudinal study of the general Norwegian adolescent population”, *J Abnorm Psychol.* 2003 Feb, 112(1), pp.144-51

3 Renee E. Sieving, Clea S. McNeely, and Robert Wm. Blum, “Maternal Expectations, Mother-Child Connectedness, and Adolescent Sexual Debut,” *Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine*, Vol. 154 (August 2000)

4 Melina Bersamin, Michael Todd, Deborah A. Fisher et al., “Parenting Practices and Adolescent Sexual Behavior: A Longitudinal Study,” *Journal of Marriage and Family*, Vol. 70 (February 2008)

5 Patricia J. Dittus and James Jaccard, “Adolescents' Perceptions of Maternal Disapproval of Sex: Relationship to Sexual Outcomes,” *Journal of Adolescent Health*, Vol. 26 (2000)

6 Laura Fingerson, “Do Mothers' Opinions Matter in Teens' Sexual Activity?” *Journal of Family Issues*, Vol. 26 (October 2005)

7 Clea McNeely, Marcia L. Shew, Trisha Beuhring et al., “Mothers' Influence on the Timing of First Sex Among 14- and 15-Year-Olds,” *Journal of Adolescent Health*, Vol. 31 (2002)

8 Michael Resnick, Peter S. Bearman, Robert Wm. Blum et al., “Protecting Adolescents From Harm,” *Journal of American Medical Association*, Vol. 278, No. 10 (September 10, 1997)

them to seek advice on sexual matters from online teen sex advice websites instead of from their parents, removes from students this protective role of their parents.

- **Coercion of girls to allow anal sex and violent/sado-masochistic sexual acts** (e.g. choking) by boys who view pornography and think that is what they can ask for – that it is normal/usual part of sexual intercourse.⁹
- **Sexual abuse of children by other children** – this is a growing problem.^{10 11 12 13}
- **Eating disorders/body image** - Our increasingly sexualised culture is causing body image issues in young girls. Add to all the sexualised messages and images in the media, advertising and pop music lyrics, a program such as SSCA which focuses on sexual orientation and gender identity and presents “relationships” as synonymous with sex, then the pressure to have a body that is ready at all times for sex if a girl should decide she is ready to, wanting to or needs to have sex (perhaps just to please her partner) or because being sexually active is presented as normal and expected must be enormous. To be ready whenever she will have sex puts enormous pressure on girls to be very aware of their body image and puts them at risk of starving themselves to look thin and attractive.
- **Increase in emotional issues** especially for girls.¹⁴
- **SSCA is based on Queer theory.** It is harmful to children and young people to impose queer theory on them, teaching them to accept a highly contested theory as factual. Rather than confirm children and young people in their identity queer theory confuses them. American doctor and adolescent psychiatrist, Miriam Grossman, testifying before a US Senate hearing said: “A child is not a miniature adult. ... Children process and integrate information and experience differently than adults; ... a child ... can be overwhelmed and confused more easily than adults; the idea of transgenderism can be confusing and frightening to children; .. this bill ignores the principles of normal

9 <http://www.news.com.au/lifestyle/relationships/sex/boner-garage-posts-a-window-into-the-world-of-sexualised-young-women-online/news-story/f7d83a68c48e378027430fd8e93da349>, accessed 11/5/2016.

10 <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/4091507/Children-sexually-assaulted-by-classmates.html>, accessed 11/5/2016.

11 <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-06-03/calls-for-action-to-halt-child-on-child-sex-abuse/5497196>, accessed 11/5/2016.

12 <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-04-30/rise-in-number-of-pre-schoolers-sexually-abusing-peers-expert/5419214>, accessed 11/5/2016.

13 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3490597/Boy-4-sexually-abused-15-children-South-Australian-kindergarten.html>, accessed 11/5/2016.

14 <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/women/mother-tongue/11554595/Pornography-has-changed-the-landscape-of-adolescence-beyond-all-recognition.html>, accessed 11/5/2016.

child development, the milestones – Gender Identity, then Gender Stability and finally Gender Permanence – this is standard child psychiatry material ...”¹⁵

- **Desensitising of children and young people by exposure to sexualised imagery** is part of the grooming process – see pages 28-29 of the Australian Family Association Submission – making children and young people vulnerable to sexual advances from adults.

¹⁵ www.youtube.com/watch?v=eTglqQFkbGY, accessed 11/5/2016.

- 2. In your evidence, you raised concerns about parental consent regarding both educational material made available to students at school, and potentially for participation in a program called Camp Out. Can you please provide the Committee with further information about whether parental consent is or is not required?**

a. Parental consent in regard to the Safe Schools Coalition Australia program

Currently there are no accommodations for parental consent in regard to a student's participation in the Safe Schools Coalition Australia Program. At a 2014 Safe Schools Symposium in Melbourne, Roz Ward, one of the founders of Safe Schools and author of SCCA resources, coached school staff on how to deal with parents who express concern about the program:

“When people do complain then school leadership can very calmly and graciously say, ‘You know what? We’re doing it anyway, tough luck!’”¹⁶

Victorian mother Cella White sought exemption for her child from the SSCA program partly because she objected to the fact that her son had been informed (during a science class) that he could cross-dress at school if he wanted to. Ultimately, she was forced to remove her son from Frankston High School after school management and SSCA informed her that such exemption was not possible. (see section 3.7 in original submission). Subsequently the Victorian Education Department also informed her that opting out of SSCA was not possible.¹⁷

Currently SSCA is opt-in at the school level with the decision to become a member of SSCA resting with the school principal. As a result of the recent Federal review of SSCA, Education Minister Simon Birmingham has recommended both that a process of parental consultation should be undertaken before a school implements the SSCA program and that parental consent be given prior to participation in SSCA lessons.¹⁸ Unfortunately his recommendations are inadequate as the SSCA program is designed to be implemented across all subject areas

¹⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j5uNocBCw3Q>, see 2:50 onwards, accessed 21/4/2016.

¹⁷ Personal communication.

¹⁸ <http://www.senatorbirmingham.com.au/Latest-News/ID/2997/Statement-on-Safe-Schools-Coalition>, accessed 21/4/2016.

and school activities¹⁹ and the program entails changing whole school policies and practices.²⁰ Hence there is no reasonable option for a parent to seek exemption for their child.

Anecdotally, some parents have stated that their school had not informed them that the SSCA program had been implemented and the parents only became aware through other sources.

SSCA links students to numerous external organisations without parental consent. One of these organisations, Twenty10, hosted a 'hands-on' workshop for youth in sadomasochistic sex and sex toys. The online advertisement for this event (**see figure below**) which appeared on the youth section of the Twenty10 website did not mention the issue of parental consent.

SSCA resources direct students to the LGBT organisation Minus18 and many of the SSCA student resources were produced by Minus18. The Minus18 website actively instructs students on how to delete their web browsing history so that their parents cannot see the sites they have visited.²¹ Encouraging students to deceive their parents is directly opposed to the concept of parental consent.

SSCA resources state that parental consent is not required for a school to affirm and facilitate the gender transition of a student.²² This is in direct conflict with parents' rights as the primary caregivers of their children.

b. Parental consent in regard to Camp Out

The arrangements regarding parental consent for Camp Out are particularly concerning. The Camp Out website gives the impression that the organisers are willing to make arrangements so that young people may attend the camp in cases where parental consent has not been granted. Under the title "I want to come to camp but I don't think I'll be allowed", the website states:

"Check out our **info for parents** page - it's specifically for parents and guardians of campers, to answer any questions about Camp. Or, feel free to get in contact with the

19 "Stand Out", Safe Schools Coalition Australia official resource, <http://www.safeschoolscoalition.org.au/stand-out>, accessed 21/4/2015.

20 "Safe Schools Do Better" (p8), Safe Schools Coalition Australia official resource, 2013, <http://www.safeschoolscoalition.org.au/safe-schools-do-better>, accessed 21/4/2015.

21 Micah Scott, "Cover Your Tracks", 31/12/12, <https://minus18.org.au/index.php/sex-love/item/144-cover-your-tracks>, accessed 21/4/2016.

22 Guide to supporting a student to affirm or transition gender identity at school. Roz Ward, Joel Radcliffe, Matthew Parsons, Mel Gaylard, Dani Wright Toussaint. Accessed 14/12/2015. <http://www.safeschoolscoalition.org.au/uploads/341c0ca18e387c50e19f562008175dbc.pdf>, accessed 21/4/2016.

Camp Crew via our **contact us** page and we'll do our best to figure something out so you are able to attend camp!"²³

The fact that the organisers of Camp Out are apparently prepared to overrule parents as the primary educators and caregivers of their children is in conflict with the Education Act.²⁴

²³ <http://campout.org.au/#news-section>, accessed 21/4/2016.

²⁴ Education Act 1990, Section 4(b), <http://www.legislation.nsw.gov.au/inforce/fc4bcf6a-d005-68af-fa91-fd9a7d10cd09/1990-8.pdf>, accessed 10/5/2016.

Claude: Safe Play Workshop

ACON and the OutPatient Health Clinic present:

Safe Play Workshop

twenty10 GLCS
KRC acon
HERE FOR HEALTH

Tuesday January 19th
2:30pm - 4:30 pm



This workshop is a fun and safe space to come and ask the questions you have been dying to ask about sex and kink and staying safe. Some of the topics we will cover are:

- How to be safe while having sex or hooking up online
- Info about testing, STIs and HIV prevention
- An intro to Kink and BDSM
- Hands on exploration with toys, tools and safe sex devices

As part of our weekly health clinic, join the folks from ACON's Young Gay Men's Project, Claude and How Hard, to discuss how to stay safe while having sex and connecting with people online or via apps.

When: Tuesday, 19 January

What time: 2:30pm - 4:30pm

Where: Twenty10, Level 1, 45 Chippen St Chippendale

For more details email rebecca@twenty10.org.au

3. Outside the Safe Schools program, are there other areas of concern for the Australian Family Association in regard to the sexualisation of children and young people?

As well as the Safe Schools program the Australian Family Association (AFA) has serious concerns about the sexualisation of children and young people in the following contexts:

- Online pornography
- Sexually violent video games
- Sexting
- Television - recent changes to the Free TV (the Association of Commercial TV stations of Australia) Code of Practice, mean that all G time slots have been replaced by PG time slots and programs rated M and MA15+ can be shown earlier in the evening, from 7.30 rather than 8.30pm as previously.
- Advertising, print and electronic.
- Music videos/lyrics
- Billboards/outdoor advertising.
- Products for children and young people - toys, clothes, fashion accessories, cosmetics and magazines
- Films

The AFA considered the sexualisation of children and young people above contexts would be covered more than adequately by other Submissions. Therefore the AFA focussed on a detailed and comprehensive Submission on how the SSCA program sexualises children and young people in the very school system itself, where they provide a captive audience for six hours a day, five days a week for forty weeks each year.