

## **SEXUALISATION OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

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**Due to graphic content, certain images within this submission have been redacted.  
The full submission is available upon request. Please contact the secretariat.  
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# **IS THE SAFE SCHOOLS COALITION AUSTRALIA INSTITUTIONALISING THE SEXUALISATION OF CHILDREN IN SCHOOLS?**

**Australian Family Association**

**Submission to the**

**Inquiry into Sexualisation of Children and  
Young People**

**PARLIAMENT OF NEW SOUTH WALES**

**COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

**11 February, 2016**

**THE AUSTRALIAN FAMILY ASSOCIATION** (the AFA) is a voluntary, non-party political organisation concerned with strengthening and support of the natural family. Among its objectives are “to cultivate within society an appreciation that the integrity and well-being of the family are essential to the stability, morale, security and prosperity of the ... nation...” and “to analyse laws and policies for their effect on the family and to formulate and promote corrective measures as necessary.”

In pursuing these objectives the AFA makes submissions to government inquiries on matters that have an impact on the family.

## **GENERAL PRINCIPLES**

The AFA holds that the family is the basic unit on which human societies are built and is the prime agency for the moral, social and emotional development of children and therefore the fundamental social unit of society as provided in the UN Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 23.1 (1), which acknowledges the family as “the natural and fundamental group unit of society entitled to protection by society and the state.”

The purpose of the family is to serve as the chief functioning mechanism for the primary delivery of social services to children in the fields of nurture, education, health and welfare.

In the light of these principles the AFA view is that any curriculum or program allowed into schools should be considered in the light of what effect it will have on the freedom and ability of families to carry out their function as the prime agency in making choices about these matters in the best interests of their children and on the prior right of parents to the kind of education they want for their children as recognized by Article 26 (3) of the International Declaration of Human Rights – “26 (3) Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.”

In pursuance of these objectives, the AFA makes the following Submission to the Inquiry into the sexualisation of children and young people.

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# Contents

<b>SAFE SCHOOLS COALITION AUSTRALIA PROVIDES LINKS FOR STUDENTS TO EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>MEMBER SCHOOLS OF SAFE SCHOOLS COALITION AUSTRALIA</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>1 ABBREVIATIONS</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>2 INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>3 THE SSCA PROGRAM: A RADICAL AGENDA THAT IS SEXUALISING CHILDREN</b>	<b>11</b>
3.1 SSCA MATERIAL HEAVY FOCUS ON SEXUALITY	11
3.2 PROMOTION OF TRANSGENDERISM IN SSCA MATERIALS	12
3.2.1 No parental consent required	12
3.2.2 Transgender treatment and rights promoted	13
3.3 SSCA ENCOURAGES STUDENTS TO BYPASS SCHOOL WEB FILTERS TO ACCESS RESTRICTED WEBSITES	16
3.4 SSCA CONNECTS STUDENTS WITH EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS	17
3.4.1 SSCA resources recommend to students organisations which link to pornographic web content, sex shops and adult online communities	19
3.4.2 SSCA resources recommend to students organisations linked with sex clubs and LGBT nightclubs	27
3.4.3 Risks involved in connecting students to adult groups outside of school	28
3.5 GOVERNMENT FUNDING OF SAFE SCHOOLS COALITION AUSTRALIA	29
3.6 CASE STUDY OF A 'SAFE' SCHOOL: WOLLONGONG HIGH SCHOOL OF THE PERFORMING ARTS	30
3.6.1 Promotion of external LGBT groups and activities at WHSPA	31
3.7 CASE STUDY: NO CHOICE TO "OPT OUT" FORCES PARENT TO TAKE CHILD OUT OF SSCA MEMBER SCHOOL	35
<b>4 ARCSHS RESEARCH WAS USED TO JUSTIFY SAFE SCHOOLS</b>	<b>36</b>
4.1 THE FALSE ARCSHS CLAIM THAT "10% OF YOUTH ARE SAME-SEX ATTRACTED"	37
4.1.1 "10%" in ARCSHS lobbying	38
4.1.2 "10%" in ARCSHS research	40
4.1.2.1 The 5th National Survey of Australian Secondary Students and Sexual Health	40
4.1.2.2 Writing Themselves in Again 2005	45
4.1.2.3 "In the too hard basket: How to deal with homophobic violence in schools"	47
4.1.2.4 The 10% figure in Anthony Smith's research and Kinsey's 10% myth	49
4.1.2.5 Reported Same Sex Attraction During Adolescence is Often Temporary and Unreliable	52
4.1.2.6 Current prevalence estimates for sexual orientation	53
4.2 HOMOPHOBIC BULLYING AND THE <i>WRITING THEMSELVES IN</i> REPORTS	54
4.2.1 The <i>Writing Themselves In</i> reports	55
4.2.2 The definition of "abuse" in the <i>Writing Themselves In</i> reports is not specified	56
4.2.3 Different populations: bullying data and prevalence of same-sex attraction	57
4.3 BULLYING IS A SERIOUS AND WIDESPREAD PROBLEM IN AUSTRALIAN SCHOOLS	57
4.3.1 Prevention of bullying	58
4.3.2 Bullying and suicide	60
4.4 SUICIDE AND SELF-HARM EVIDENCE HAS BEEN MISREPRESENTED TO JUSTIFY SSCA	61
4.4.1 Has the relationship between early sexual debut and self-harm been ignored?	62
4.4.2 Intimate partner violence	67
<b>5 TRANSGENDERISM</b>	<b>67</b>
5.1 A PSYCHOLOGICAL DISORDER	68
5.2 GENDER TRANSITION: A MEDICAL EXPERIMENT ON CHILDREN	69
5.3 REGRET	71
<b>6 CONCLUSION</b>	<b>73</b>
<b>7 RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	<b>74</b>
<b>APPENDIX</b>	<b>76</b>
<b>EXTERNAL GROUPS ADVERTISED ON THE LGBTIQ NOTICE BOARD AT WOLLONGONG HIGH SCHOOL OF THE PERFORMING ARTS</b>	<b>76</b>





## Member schools of Safe Schools Coalition Australia

(<http://www.safeschoolscoalition.org.au/>, 3/2/2016)

### NSW

Albury High School  
Alexandria Park  
Community School  
Armidale High  
School  
ASPECT Central  
Coast School  
Bega High School  
Bellingen High  
Bellingen Primary  
School  
Belmont High  
School  
Berkeley Vale  
Public School  
Bishop Druitt  
College  
Blaxland High  
School  
Bligh Park Public  
School  
Brunswick Heads  
Public School  
Bulahdelah Central  
School  
Burwood Girls High  
Callaghan College  
Jesmond College  
Callala Public  
School  
Cambewarra Public  
School  
Cammeraygal High  
School  
Canterbury Girls  
High School  
Carlingford High  
School  
Cheltenham Girls  
High School  
Coffs Harbour High  
School  
Colo High School  
Coonabarabran  
High School  
Currambena School

Dapto High School  
Dubbo College  
South Campus  
Dulwich High  
School of Visual  
Arts and Design  
Evans River  
Community School  
Fort Street High  
School  
Glen Innes High  
School  
Glenwood High  
School  
Gloucester High  
School  
Gorokan High  
School  
Gosford High  
School  
Great Lakes College  
- Forster Campus  
Henry Kendall High  
Holsworthy High  
School  
Homebush Boys  
High School  
Hunter School Of  
The Performing  
Arts  
Hurlstone  
Agricultural High  
School  
International  
Grammar School  
Inverell High  
School  
Irrawang High  
School  
James Fallon High  
School  
James Meehan High  
School  
Jamison High  
School  
Kyogle High School

Lisarow High  
School  
Lismore High  
School  
Lismore Public  
School  
Liverpool Boys  
High School  
Lucas Heights  
Community School  
Macintyre High  
School  
Maclean High  
School  
Macquarie  
Grammar School  
Marrickville West  
Primary School  
Merewether High  
School  
Merriwa Central  
School  
Middleton Public  
School  
Mount View High  
School  
Mullumbimby High  
School  
Murray High  
School  
Muswellbrook High  
School  
Narara Valley High  
School  
Narrabri High  
School  
Newtown High  
School Of The  
Performing Arts  
North Sydney Boys  
High School  
North Sydney Girls  
High School  
Northlakes High  
School  
Orange High School  
Orara High School

Parkes Public  
School  
Parramatta High  
School  
Parramatta West  
Public School  
Penrith High  
Richmond River  
High School  
Rose Bay  
Secondary College  
Seven Hills High  
School  
Shoalhaven High  
School  
Singleton High  
School  
Smith's Hill High  
School  
South Grafton High  
School  
St Marys Senior  
High School  
Sydney Secondary  
College -  
Leichhardt Campus  
Sydney Technical  
High School  
Tamworth High  
School  
Tamworth Public  
School  
Tempe High School  
The Emanuel  
School  
The Forest High  
School  
The Scots School  
Albury  
Tomerong Public  
School  
Tooleybuc Central  
School  
Toomina High  
School  
Trangie Central  
School

Tuggerah Lakes  
Secondary College -  
The Entrance  
Campus  
Tuggerah Lakes  
Secondary College -  
Tumbi Umbi  
Campus  
Tumut High School  
Vardys Road Public  
School  
Vincentia High  
School  
Wadalba  
Community School  
Wahroonga Public  
School  
Warakirri College  
Wee Waa High  
School  
Wellington High  
School  
Wilsons Creek  
Public School  
Windsor Park  
Public School  
Wollongong High  
School of the  
Performing Arts  
Woonona High  
School  
Wyong High School

## **VIC**

Albert Park College  
Alia College  
Alkira Secondary  
College  
Alphington Primary  
School  
Altona Green  
Primary School  
Altona Primary  
School  
AMEP/Language &  
Literacy Program  
Ashwood  
Secondary College  
Ballarat High  
School  
Balwyn High  
School

Beaconhills College  
Bellarine Secondary  
College  
Belmont High  
School  
Benalla P-12  
College  
Bentleigh  
Secondary College  
Berwick College  
Bialik College  
Billanook College  
Blackburn High  
School  
Box Hill High  
School  
Box Hill Senior  
Secondary College  
Braybrook College  
Brentwood  
Secondary College  
Brighton Secondary  
College  
Brunswick East  
Primary School  
Brunswick  
Secondary College  
Buckley Park  
College  
Bundoora  
Secondary College  
Buninyong Primary  
School  
CAE College  
Camberwell  
Grammar School  
Camberwell High  
School  
Cambridge Primary  
School  
Canterbury Girls'  
Secondary College  
Carey Baptist  
Grammar School  
Carranballac P-9  
College  
Carrum Downs  
Secondary College  
Castlemaine  
Secondary College  
Caulfield Grammar  
School

Caulfield Park  
Community School  
Chaffey Secondary  
College  
Cheltenham  
Secondary College  
Collingwood  
College  
Copperfield College  
Cranbourne East  
Secondary College  
Cranbourne  
Secondary College  
Croydon  
Community School  
Dimboola Memorial  
Secondary College  
Dromana Secondary  
College  
East Doncaster  
Secondary College  
Edenhope College  
Elisabeth Murdoch  
College  
Eltham College of  
Education  
Eltham High School  
Elwood College  
Emerald Secondary  
College  
Epping Secondary  
College  
Essendon East  
Keilor District  
College  
Federation College  
Federation College  
Ferntree Gully  
North Primary  
School  
Fintona Girls'  
School  
Fitzroy High School  
Footscray City  
College  
Forest Hill College  
Fountain Gate  
Secondary College  
Frankston High  
School  
FRESH Program

Geelong Grammar  
School  
Geelong High  
School  
Gilmore College for  
Girls  
Gisborne Secondary  
College  
Glen Eira College  
Glen Waverley  
Secondary College  
Gleneagles  
Secondary College  
Goulburn Valley  
Grammar School  
Greensborough  
Secondary College  
Hallam Senior  
College  
Hampton Park  
Secondary College  
Hawkesdale P-12  
College  
Heathmont College  
Heywood District  
Secondary College  
Highvale Primary  
School  
Holmesglen TAFE -  
Community and  
Transitional  
Education  
Department  
Hoppers Crossing  
Secondary College  
Horsham College  
Hume Central  
Secondary College -  
Blair Street Campus  
Hume Central  
Secondary College -  
Dimboola Road  
Campus  
Ivanhoe Girls'  
Grammar School  
Ivanhoe Grammar  
School  
John Monash  
Science School  
Kambrya College  
Keilor Downs  
Secondary College

Kew High School	Melton Specialist School	Northern College of the Arts and Technology	Rowville Secondary School
Keysborough Secondary College	Mentone Girls' Grammar School	Nossal High School	Roxburgh College
Kingswood College	Mentone Girls' Secondary College	Oakwood School - Franskton	Royal Children's Hospital Education Institute
Koonung Secondary College	Mentone Grammar	Oakwood School - Noble Park	Rutherglen High School
Kooweerup Secondary College	Merino Consolidated School	Oakwood School - Pakenham	Ruyton Girls' School
Kurnai College	Methodist Ladies College	Oatlands Primary School	Sandringham College
Kurunjang Secondary College	Mill Park Secondary College	Ocean Grove Primary School	School for Student Leadership
Kyneton Secondary College	Monterey Secondary College	Overnewton Anglican Community College	Scoresby Secondary College
Lakeview Senior College	Montmorency Secondary College	Pakenham Springs Primary School	SEDA
Lalor East Primary School	Mooroolbark College	Parkdale Secondary College	Shepparton High School
Lara Secondary College	Mooroopna Secondary College	Patterson River Secondary College	Sherbrooke Community School
Lilydale High School	Mordialloc College	Pearcedale Primary School	Sholem Aleichem College
Little Yarra Steiner School	Mornington Park Primary School	Penleigh and Essendon Grammar School	Skillsplus Youth Education
Lorne-Aireys Inlet P-12 College	Mornington Secondary College	Peter Lalor Secondary College	Somerville Secondary College
Lowther Hall Anglican Grammar School	Mount Alexander College	Point Cook Prep - Year 9 College	South Oakleigh Secondary College
Lyndhurst Secondary College	Mount Eliza Secondary College	Point Cook Senior Secondary College	Southern Teaching Unit
Macleod College	Mount Ridley College	Portland Secondary College	Spensley Street Primary School
MacRobertson Girls' High School	Mount Waverley Secondary College	Preshil - The Margaret Lyttle Memorial School	St Albans Secondary College
Manor Lakes College	Mt Clear College	Princes Hill Secondary College	St Arnaud Secondary College
Maribyrnong College	Mt. Erin Secondary College	Red Cliffs Secondary College	St Helena Secondary College
Matthew Flinders Girls Secondary College	Narre Warren South P-12 College	Reservoir High School	St Joseph's Flexible Learning Centre
McGuire College	Newcomb Secondary College	Ringwood Secondary College	St Joseph's School
McKinnon Secondary College	Newport Lakes Primary School	RMIT VCE Program	St Kilda Primary School
Melba College	North Geelong Secondary School	Rosehill Secondary College	St Leonard's College
Melbourne Academy	Northcote High School		Staughton College
Melbourne Girls' College	Northcote Primary School		Strathmore Secondary College
Melbourne High School			Sunbury College
Melton Secondary College			

Suzanne Cory High School  
 Swan Hill College  
 Swinburne Senior College  
 Sydney Road Community School  
 Taradale Primary School  
 Tarneit Senior College  
 Taylors Lakes Secondary College  
 Templestowe College  
 The Berry Street School  
 The Brunswick Learning Space  
 The Grange P-12 College  
 The King David School  
 The Pavillion School  
 The Peninsula School  
 Thornbury High School  
 Timbarra College  
 Trafalgar High School  
 Traralgon College  
 Junior Campus  
 Travancore School  
 Trinity Grammar School  
 Tyabb Railway Station Primary School  
 University High School  
 Upwey High School  
 Vermont Secondary College  
 Victoria University Secondary College  
 Viewbank College  
 Viewbank Primary School  
 Wandin Yallock Primary School

Wanganui Park Secondary College  
 Wangaratta High School  
 Wantirna College  
 Warragul Regional College  
 Warrandyte High School  
 Warrnambool College  
 Werribee Secondary College  
 Wesburn Primary School  
 Westall Secondary College  
 Westbourne Grammar School  
 Wheelers Hill Secondary College  
 Whittlesea Secondary College  
 William Ruthven Secondary College  
 Williamstown Primary School  
 Wodonga Middle Years College  
 Wodonga Senior Secondary College  
 Wonthaggi Secondary College  
 Woodleigh School  
 Wooragee Primary School  
 Yarrawonga College P-12

## WA

Belridge Secondary College  
 Bunbury Senior High School  
 Busselton Senior High School  
 Coodanup Community College  
 Derby District High School  
 Ellenbrook Secondary College

Hampton Senior High School  
 Instrumental Music School Services  
 Kent Street Senior High School  
 Mount Lawley Senior High School  
 Ocean Reef Senior High School  
 Presbyterian Ladies' College  
 SEDA  
 Shenton College  
 South Thornlie Primary School  
 Southern River College  
 Sowilo Community High School  
 Thornlie Senior High School

## SA

Aberfoyle Park High School  
 Adelaide High School  
 Adelaide Secondary School of English  
 Banksia Park International High School  
 Birdwood High School  
 Blackwood High School  
 Brighton Secondary School  
 Christies Beach High School  
 Eynesbury Senior College  
 Findon High School  
 Glenunga International High School  
 Glossop High School  
 Golden Grove High School

Greenwith Primary School  
 Hallett Cove School  
 Hamilton Secondary College  
 John Pirie Secondary School  
 Kangaroo Island Community Education  
 Kapunda High School  
 Le Fevre High School  
 Leigh Creek Area School  
 Marryatville High School  
 Mount Barker High School  
 Mount Gambier High School  
 Munno Parra Primary School  
 Murray Bridge High School  
 Northern Adelaide Senior College  
 Ocean View College  
 Paralowie R-12 School  
 Plympton Primary School  
 Port Augusta Secondary School  
 Port Broughton Area School  
 Port Pirie West Primary  
 Pulteney Grammar School  
 Renmark High School  
 Reynella East College  
 Salisbury High School  
 Scotch College  
 Adelaide  
 Seaton High School

Seaview High  
School  
St Peter's College  
The Heights School  
The Hills  
Montessori School  
Thebarton Senior  
College  
Tumby Bay Area  
School  
Underdale High  
School  
Unley High School  
Urrbrae Agricultural  
High School  
Valley View  
Secondary School  
Victor Harbor High  
School  
Victor Harbor R-7  
School  
Waikerie High  
School  
Westminster School  
Whyalla High  
School  
William Light R-12  
School  
Willunga High  
School  
Wirreanda High  
School  
Woodville High  
Wudinna Area  
School  
Yorke town Area  
School

## **TAS**

Clarence High  
Cosgrove High  
School  
Deloraine High  
School  
Don College  
Dover District High  
School  
Glenora District  
School  
Hellyer College  
Huonville High  
School

Kingston High  
School  
Launceston College  
Rose Bay High  
School  
Snug Primary  
School  
Ulverstone High  
School  
West Ulverstone  
Primary  
Yolla District High  
School

## **ACT**

Alfred Deakin High  
School  
Amaroo School  
Campbell High  
School  
Canberra Girls'  
Grammar School  
Canberra High  
School  
Caroline Chisholm  
School  
Dickson College  
Florey Primary  
School  
Gold Creek School  
Gungahlin College  
Hawker College  
Hughes Primary  
School  
Lanyon High  
School  
Lyneham High  
School  
Majura Primary  
School  
Melba Copland  
Secondary School  
Melrose High  
School  
Namadgi School  
Narrabundah  
College  
The Canberra  
College  
The Woden School

University of  
Canberra High  
School Kaleen  
Wanniassa School

## **QLD**

The SSQA website  
does not name its  
member schools in  
Queensland  
however it appears  
that there are 26  
member schools in  
the state.

## **NT**

No SSQA member  
schools.

# 1 Abbreviations

<b>ARCSHS</b>	The Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, La Trobe University.
<b>LGBT</b>	Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender.
<b>LGBTIQ</b>	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and questioning.
<b>SSCA</b>	Safe Schools Coalition Australia.
<b>SSCV</b>	Safe Schools Coalition Victoria
<b>WTI</b>	The <i>Writing Themselves In</i> report.
<b>WTIA</b>	The <i>Writing Themselves In Again</i> report.
<b>WTI3</b>	The <i>Writing Themselves In 3</i> report.

## 2 Introduction

The *Inquiry into the Sexualisation of Children and Young People* is considering all aspects and causes of the sexualisation of children. This submission focuses on the Safe Schools Coalition Australia (SSCA) program which, since its launch in June 2014 has been implemented with Federal funding in over 480 Australian high schools and primary schools.

While purporting to be an anti-bullying program SSCA focuses heavily on sexual activity, sexual attractions, sexual orientation and gender. SSCA resources, partners and supporter organisations link to gay sex organisations, LGBT nightclubs, pornographic web content, sex shops and adult online communities.

The years of childhood and adolescence are vital periods of growth and development during which young people are forming their character and identity. It is within these periods that students are being exposed to SSCA content which encourages them to:

- question their sexual orientation and gender identity;
- adopt a label such as gay, lesbian, queer or “pansexual”;
- view all forms of sexual activity as acceptable, normal and safe;
- connect with lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) adult groups outside the school;
- ask teachers to unblock explicit websites which are blocked by the Department of Education school internet filtering system; and
- consider irreversible gender transition treatment, which is dangerous to a person’s physical and mental health, as a valid option.

Researchers from the Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society (ARCSHS), La Trobe University have been responsible for:

- creating and implementing Safe Schools Coalition Victoria (SSCV) which was the precursor and model for SSCA;
- inaccurate and misleading research used to justify SSCA;
- lobbying which enabled the implementation of SSCA; and
- directly supporting the implementation of SSCA in Victorian schools.

The ARCSHS publications used to justify SSCA are dismissive of serious research that is in conflict with the radical premises of the SSCA program which, rather than providing a “safe environment” for children, may rather be effectively institutionalising the sexualisation of children.



# 3 The SSCA program: a radical agenda that is sexualising children

## 3.1 SSCA material promotes an obsession with sexuality

Official SSCA promotional and educational materials are aimed at encouraging students to focus on and question their sexuality and gender. *All of Us*<sup>1</sup> is a lengthy SSCA teaching resource designed for Years 7 and 8. As an example of the content, the *All of Us* teachers guide suggests that students complete activities while imagining that they are over 16 and in a same-sex relationship (p.20, *All of Us* unit guide<sup>2</sup>). Students are not so subtly encouraged to adopt a label such as gay, lesbian or pansexual with one student handout providing scales of sexual attraction and sexual behaviour (“who do you get together with”) as factors to consider in sexual identity (p.24, *All of Us* student handouts<sup>3</sup>).

SSCA promotional materials aimed at students attempts to normalise a radical sexual agenda:

“When I was 16, I felt I had fully come to terms with my sexuality, and felt the term pansexual really described how I felt.” (p.22, *OMG im queer*<sup>4</sup>)

“Michael told us he was a lesbian like 2 years ago, and we were all like “who cares” type of thing. It wasn’t a big deal at all. But it’s been soo tricky trying to remember to refer to the person who was my sister as my brother (and trying to explain it to my friends at school).” (p.13, *OMG my friends queer*<sup>5</sup>)

“The idea that you’ve gotta act a certain way just because of what bits you have between your legs is pretty outdated.” (p.9, *OMG my friends queer*)

“Others, like me, find their sexuality is fluid, and changes over time: sometimes liking guys more, sometimes liking girls more.” (p.7, *OMG im queer*)

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1 *All of Us* Teaching Resource, <http://www.safeschoolscoalition.org.au/all-of-us#download-resources>, accessed 31/1/2016.

2 *All of Us* Unit Guide, <http://www.safeschoolscoalition.org.au/app/theme/default/design/assets/all-of-us/documents/unit-guide.pdf>, accessed 31/1/2016.

3 *All of Us* Student Handouts, <http://www.safeschoolscoalition.org.au/app/theme/default/design/assets/all-of-us/documents/student-handouts.pdf>, accessed 31/1/2016.

4 *OMG im queer*, <http://www.safeschoolscoalition.org.au/uploads/1c319a8803b891fac1c455e6b87affa6.pdf>, accessed 31/1/2016.

5 *OMG my friends queer*, <http://www.safeschoolscoalition.org.au/uploads/2dd9051c41af2766cacf2b3b0fccd00b.pdf>, accessed 31/1/2016.

“One day, [my same-sex boyfriend and I] were sitting in my room together, cuddling on my bed.” ... “Mum walked in just as we flew to opposite sides of the bed.” (p.24, *OMG im queer*)

Students are encouraged to adopt a label such as “Pansexual” which SSCA defines as:

“Someone who is attracted to people of a number of different genders, which may include people who identify as transgender or gender diverse. Some people may use both bisexual and pansexual to describe themselves.” (p.9, *OMG my friends queer*)

## 3.2 Promotion of transgenderism in SSCA materials

Transgenderism is promoted extensively by SSCA. The SSCA website provides its official resource *Guide to supporting a student to affirm or transition gender identity at school*,<sup>6</sup> which advises schools how to develop a plan to manage a student’s gender transition.

### 3.2.1 No parental consent required

Serious questions are raised in SSCA materials regarding consent for gender treatments. SSCA encourages schools to overrule parents where parents do not give permission for their child to undergo gender transition treatment.

The first page of *Guide to supporting a student to affirm or transition gender identity at school* states that parental consent is not strictly required for the school to assist a student in their gender transition and that it is up to the school to decide:

“whether it would be appropriate to involve the students parent(s) or guardian(s).”

also:

“It may be possible to consider a student a mature minor and able to make decisions without parental consent” (p.1, *Guide*)

The document stresses that it is purely the choice of the student and that gender is not related to their biological sex:

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<sup>6</sup> *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 3/2/2016.

“It does not matter what sex the person was assigned at birth, or whether the person has undergone any medical intervention. This includes people who identify as women, men or as neither male nor female.” (p.1, *Guide*)

ARCSHS research<sup>7</sup> noted a case in which teachers allowed a male student to leave school to attend medical appointments for gender transition without parental permission (the ARCSHS researcher described this extreme case of misconduct simply as “support from teachers”). The student is quoted as stating:

“My teachers broke multiple rules to allow me to leave school without my parents’ permission for medical appointments.”

### 3.2.2 Transgender treatment and rights promoted

Students with transgenderism are encouraged to use any change room or toilet they wish. There is no concern for the privacy of other students.

“As part of the written plan, confirm the toilets, changing rooms, showers, and swimming facilities based on the student’s gender identity and the facilities they will feel most comfortable using.” (p3, *Guide*)

The school is instructed to ensure that changes of name and pronouns are adhered to. Cross-dressing is encouraged and it is suggested that the whole school might change its uniform policy.

“Confirm the appropriate uniform that matches the gender identity of the student and adheres to your school dress or uniform code. It could be timely for the school to consider how inclusive your current dress code or uniform policy is and whether it could be updated.” (p.3, *Guide*)

Schools are to provide students the option of wearing any part of the school uniform regardless of gender.<sup>8</sup> Boys can wear girl’s uniforms and girls can wear boy’s uniforms.

Minus18 is an organisation that develops much of the SSCA material and teaching resources and is effectively an extension of SSCA used to promote its more extreme content. Official SSCA

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7 Smith, Elizabeth, slide presentation: *Gender affirming schools: Towards safe schools for gender diverse and transgender young people in Australia*, (2015), La Trobe University, Melbourne, <http://www.youthhealth2015.com.au/presentations/Friday/Gender%20and%20Sexuality/1445-1530/Elizabeth%20Smith.pdf>, accessed 15/1/2016.

8 Guide sheet. GENDER IS NOT UNIFORM Inclusive School Uniform Guidelines. Safe Schools Coalition Victoria, La Trobe University, Roz Ward, Joel Radcliffe, Micah Scott. <http://www.safeschoolscoalition.org.au/uploads/5800d52c9ac32c5049ebd234478df846.pdf> 14/12/2015

resources direct students to the minus18 website. *OMG I'm Trans*<sup>9</sup> is a resource available on the minus18 website produced in collaboration with Safe Schools Coalition Victoria.

It is hard to know what is being promoted when:

“Basically what exactly ‘gender’ means varies from person to person.” (p.7, *OMG im Trans*)

They promote the idea of using “they” instead of “he” or “she”.

“Pronouns you’ve probably heard before are ‘he’, ‘she’, ‘they’. There are also gender neutral pronouns like ‘ze’ or ‘fae’ some people use”. (p.9, *OMG im Trans*)

“Spoiler alert, it’s a total lie that all guys have dicks, that all girls have vaginas, and that’s what makes a relationship ‘straight’ or ‘gay’.” (p.24, *OMG im Trans*)

“Trans young people sometimes have personal names for their body parts and it’s important to be aware and respectful of what those are. I guess I’ve referred to mine as a ‘girl-penis’ before.” (p.24, *OMG im Trans*)

Use of sex toys is promoted to students:

“Being trans doesn’t exclude you from safe sex, kiddo! Pregnancy and STIs are still a thing, and using protection (on your body and your toys) is still super important.” (p24, *OMG im Trans*)

*Gender Questioning*<sup>10</sup> is a booklet available on the SSCA website. It provides advice to students on treatment including surgery:

“Medical transitioning is when a trans person makes the decision to access medical options, such as hormones, surgery or behaviour training to feel more comfortable in their own skin.” (p11, *Gender Questioning*)

“When under 18, the first medical option available to you is puberty blockers. They’re most effective for people in the early stages of puberty, if you’re younger it’s definitely worth discussing with your doctor.” (p.11, *Gender Questioning*)

The booklet *OMG im Trans* introduces the idea of body-mutilating surgery and hormone treatments disruptive to normal sexual development to children and adolescents:

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9 *OMG I'm Trans*, MINUS18, 2015, Edited by Margot Fink , Micah Scott, <https://minus18.org.au/index.php/resource-packs/omg-i-m-trans> accessed 14/12/2015

10 *Gender Questioning*, <http://www.safeschoolscoalition.org.au/uploads/41786dc83c65fe280bf3e6728d66cc4b.pdf>, accessed 31/1/2016.

“If you’re interested, once you’re 18 you can start hormone replacement therapy (HRT). This is when you adjust hormone levels in your body to better reflect your identity. Beginning HRT under 18 years of age is tricky, and requires a ruling from the Family Court.” (p.11, *OMG im Trans*)

“Surgery is something you might consider too, and while it isn’t for everyone, for some it can be hugely beneficial. For chest and genital surgeries you will need additional approvals from your psychiatrist. At present, both top surgery (surgery on your chest) and genital surgery can’t actually be performed on anyone under 18 years of age in Victoria. Cosmetic surgeries such as nose or chin reconstructions are not subject to special restrictions.” (p.11, *OMG im Trans*)

Within the booklet *OMG im Trans* the section “Getting Down to It” states:

“Navigating sex and relationships can be intimidating, but also really exciting. If you’re not currently in a relationship, but you’re out as trans, then you’re already halfway there. A lot of people will be a lot more accepting than you might think, and to be in a happy, healthy relationship you want to be with someone who can see you for who you really are. (p24, *OMG im Trans*)

“Tucking sometimes involves a technique of placing the testicles back inside the pockets inside your abdomen that lie on either side of the penis. If it feels too weird, a tuck can still work without it. The next step is to pull the penis backwards, in between your legs.” (p30, *OMG im Trans*)

“Binding is a great way to temporarily and non-surgically reduce the size of your chest. A binder is used to compress your chest to make it appear flat/smaller.” (p30, *OMG im Trans*)

“If you notice any pain in your chest, give yourself a breather and try to restrict yourself to no more than 8 hours of binding at a time.” (p30, *OMG im Trans*)

“A packer is pretty much a penis to pack downstairs. Put it down your pants and hey presto! You may need a harness to make sure it stays in place, but tight underwear will generally do the job.” (p.30, *OMG im Trans*)

Students are encouraged to use opposite-sex public toilets:

“Victoria has no explicit laws about using public bathrooms and you can use whichever ones you want.” (p.36, *OMG im Trans*)

The issue of transgender students using opposite biological-sex toilets and change rooms is also an issue in the United States. Recently, a group of six high-school girls in Cook County, Illinois, spoke

out against an education department decision allow a transgender male student access to the school's female locker room. The girls asked that their rights also be respected. They said, in part:<sup>11</sup>

"It is unfair to infringe upon the rights of others to accommodate one person..."

"Although we will never fully understand your personal struggle, they said [of the transgender student], please understand that we, too, all are experiencing personal struggles that need to be respected."

### 3.3 SSCA encourages students to bypass school web filters to access restricted websites

Filtered internet access is provided to students in NSW schools. The Education Department's internet filtering system which is provided by BlueCoat is designed to provide a high level of protection by blocking certain categories of materials.<sup>12</sup> Categories which are blocked across all schools and year levels include "pornography", "Adult/Mature Content", "Sex Education" and "Mixed Content/Potentially Adult". The NSW Department of Education and Communities policy, "Online Communication Services: Acceptable Usage for School Students",<sup>13</sup> refers to this filtering, which is "applied as a departmental standard" and states students must report "any internet site accessed that is considered inappropriate" (Section 5.1). The Victorian Department of Education uses a similar filtering system<sup>14</sup>, but Victorian principals have permission to block or allow websites at the school level, whereas in NSW a teacher must apply to the central IT Department to unblock a site.

The SSCA booklet *Stand Out* actively encourages students to lobby teachers to have restricted sites unblocked:

"Try accessing the website minus18.org.au, safeschoolscoalition.org.au or some of the groups listed at the back of this guide. Are any of them blocked? If so, for what reason? Speak to a teacher about the importance of allowing students to access them at school, and let them know why this matters." (p18, *Stand Out*)

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11 Kensley Harkness, "Why These High School Girls Don't Want a Transgender Student in Their Locker Room", The Daily Signal, December 21, 2015.

[http://dailysignal.com/2015/12/21/why-these-high-school-girls-dont-want-transgender-student-a-in-their-locker-room/?utm\\_source=heritagefoundation&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=saturday&mkt\\_tok=3RkMMJWWfF9wsRovukXIZKXonjHpfX57O0pW6C2g4kz2EFye%2BLIHETpodcMTcZgNbZyDBceEJhqvQJxPr3NLtQN191pRhLiDA%3D%3D](http://dailysignal.com/2015/12/21/why-these-high-school-girls-dont-want-transgender-student-a-in-their-locker-room/?utm_source=heritagefoundation&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=saturday&mkt_tok=3RkMMJWWfF9wsRovukXIZKXonjHpfX57O0pW6C2g4kz2EFye%2BLIHETpodcMTcZgNbZyDBceEJhqvQJxPr3NLtQN191pRhLiDA%3D%3D)

12 NSW Department of Education IT Services and Support website, [https://portalsrvs.det.nsw.edu.au/f5-w-68747470733a2f2f646574777772e6465742e6e73772e6564752e6175\\$\\$/it/learnsysupport/fib/fib\\_index.htm](https://portalsrvs.det.nsw.edu.au/f5-w-68747470733a2f2f646574777772e6465742e6e73772e6564752e6175$$/it/learnsysupport/fib/fib_index.htm), accessed 23/1/2016.

13 [https://www.det.nsw.edu.au/policies/general\\_man/general/accep\\_use/PD20020046.shtml](https://www.det.nsw.edu.au/policies/general_man/general/accep_use/PD20020046.shtml), accessed 23/1/2016.

14 <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/bullystoppers/Pages/prinregulationinternet.aspx>, accessed 23/1/2016.

As discussed below, SSCA directs students to a number of sites containing highly inappropriate content including the website of Minus18.

Note: It appears inconsistent that the filtering category “Sexual Expression” is actually allowed by the NSW Education Department. Nevertheless, minus18.org.au and other websites which students are directed to by SSCA contain explicit material that would clearly fall in the category “Adult/Mature Content”.

### **3.4 SSCA connects students with external organisations**

SSCA material frequently encourages students to become involved with a number of external organisations, both online and in person, while parental consent is not even mentioned. Some of these organisations are of an adult/erotic nature and raise serious concerns regarding child protection. SSCA operates as a gateway to connect students to these sorts of organisations (**Figure 1**).





### 3.4.1 SSCA resources recommend to students organisations which link to pornographic web content, sex shops and adult online communities

The SSCA booklet *OMG im queer* directs students to numerous organisations which are either LGBT specific or involved in LGBT activism. It is highly likely that students may choose Facebook or other online communities as their preferred method of connecting with some of these organisations:

- Minus18 – LGBT youth organisation.
- QLife – Peer-supported telephone and online-chat support to LGBT people of all ages.
- Sexual Health and Family Planning ACT
- Bit Bent – Support group for LGBTIQ young people.
- Family Planning NSW
- Twenty10 – LGBT organisation working with people of all ages. Runs a “hands-on” sadomasochistic sex-toy workshop for youth<sup>15</sup>.
- Northern Territory AIDS and Hepatitis Council
- Working It Out – LGBT organisation working with people of all ages.
- Family Planning Queensland
- Open Doors Youth Service – LGBT support service.
- Shine SA (Sexual Health Information, Networking and Education SA)
- Freedom Centre – Organisation focusing on sexuality and gender issues.

Given the sex-related nature of these organisations and the fact that children are being directed to them by SSCA, it is reasonable to surmise that the social networking sites of these organisations may attract sexual predators.

Most SSCA material directs students to Minus18, which, according to its website, is “Australia's largest youth-led organisation for GLBT youth”. While claiming to be separate from SSCA, Minus18 is effectively an extension of SSCA having produced the syllabus content *All of Us* as well as much of the SSCA promotional material. Being nominally independent allows Minus18 to operate outside of any restrictions that may be placed on a school-oriented organisation.

Minus18 provides an online forum<sup>16</sup> that also acts as a customised social networking site with a user base of over 5000 people. It is unclear what measures if any are taken regarding child protection on this site.

Minus18 also organises events and activities for children and young people outside of school. Given the explicit content of their web page and YouTube channel<sup>17</sup>, it is doubtful that parents would see this promotion of Minus18 as providing appropriate care to their children.

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<sup>15</sup> <http://www.twenty10.org.au/youth>, accessed 31/1/2016.

<sup>16</sup> <https://minus18.org.au/index.php/forums>, accessed 9/1/2016.

The Minus18 website contains highly sexual material. The article “When are you Ready to Do It?”<sup>18</sup> provides no minimum age for sex but does give a range of other advice:

“Guys, I’m not going to lie – sex can be pretty damn fun!”

“It may come as a surprise, but there is no strict definition for virginity, especially if you’re queer. Penis-in-vagina sex is not the only sex, and certainly not the ‘ultimate sex’.”

- “Make sure you’re both turned on and in the mood before you start.
- If there’s any kind of fingering, cut those nails and remove any nail polish first!
- Use plenty of lube when there’s penetration.”

“Choosing when to have sex, if at all, is totally up to you and completely valid.”

What message does this content send to young people? Does it suggest that they are available for sexual activity?

In an article entitled “Cover Your Tracks”<sup>19</sup>, Minus18 chief executive Micah Scott advises students on how to delete their internet browsing history, while in other Minus18 content students are encouraged to deceive their parents. Multiple partners and childhood sex are presented as acceptable.

“Unless your parents walk in on you two on top of each other (more talk about that later) you’re going to be fine.”<sup>20</sup>

“It doesn’t matter if someone sleeps with more girls, guys, or people who identify as neither. It’s more about the fact that they have an attraction to more than one gender.”<sup>21</sup>

“ ‘So how did you loose your virginity?’ ... ‘Oh goodness. I was about 12 [interviewer and interviewee laugh] she was an older girl at high school ...’ ”<sup>22</sup>

“ ‘What advice would you give to anyone who’s thinking of loosing their virginity?’ ... ‘Just relax, take it easy and take it slow and use lots of lube.’ ”<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> <https://minus18.org.au/index.php/resources/minustv>, accessed 31/1/2016.

<sup>18</sup> “When are you Ready to Do It?”, 1/10/12, <https://minus18.org.au/index.php/sex-love/item/109-doing-it>, accessed 6/1/2016.

<sup>19</sup> Micah Scott, “Cover Your Tracks”, 31/12/12, <https://minus18.org.au/index.php/sex-love/item/144-cover-your-tracks>, accessed 7/1/2016.

<sup>20</sup> “Dating on the down low”, Indigo Lamb, September 15, 2014.

<https://minus18.org.au/index.php/resources/sexuality-info/item/446-dating-on-the-down-low>, accessed 13/12/2015.

<sup>21</sup> “Where are my bisexuals at?”, Argo Theoharis, May 14, 2015.

<https://minus18.org.au/index.php/resources/sexuality-info/item/591-where-are-my-bisexuals-at>?, accessed 13/12/2015.

<sup>22</sup> MINUSTV: “Does Virginity Matter?”, <https://minus18.org.au/index.php/resources/minustv/item/373-virginity>, accessed 26/12/2015.

The seriousness of sexually transmitted infections – which can be further transmitted to others and that can have serious health consequences, including sterility – is downplayed:

“So I done fucked up. Literally. One Grindr hook-up gone wrong, and that’s how I got myself some gonorrhoea. But let’s backtrack here so I can fill out some holes (pun intended) in my little life drama. ... Contracting such STIs are actually quite common. It wasn’t the end of the world. It was just a part of life as a sexually active individual.”<sup>24</sup>

One Minus18 article<sup>25</sup> describes for students how to bind your chest. This is a dangerous practice which can be lethal. That article lists under “Useful Websites” a few “wicked websites...as somewhere to start” including the website of a sex shop named “Tool Shed”<sup>26</sup> which stocks a range of sex toys and sadomasochistic items such as restraints, gags and whips (**Figure 2**) as well as pornography (**Figure 3**).

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<sup>23</sup> MINUSTV: “Does Virginitv Matter?”, <https://minus18.org.au/index.php/resources/minustv/item/373-virginity>, accessed 26/12/2015.

<sup>24</sup> “So You Got An STI. Now What?”, 11 February 2015, <https://minus18.org.au/index.php/sex-love/item/513-so-you-got-an-sti-now-what?>, accessed 13/12/2015.

<sup>25</sup> <https://minus18.org.au/index.php/resources/sexuality-info/item/441-how-to-bind-your-chest>, accessed 26/12/2015.

<sup>26</sup> <http://www.toolshedtoys.com/>, accessed 6/1/2016.

Under the heading “Other Groups in Victoria” the Minus18 website provides a link<sup>27</sup> to the US-based Scarleteen website<sup>28</sup>, declaring: “Thousands of sexual health questions are answered for you – nothing is off limits!” Scarleteen is aimed at adolescents and answers questions about sex submitted by minors. The website contains recommendations on how to restrain a sex partner with rope<sup>29</sup>, using sex toys such as dildos and vibrators<sup>30</sup>, as well as how to masturbate using electric shavers and toothbrushes.<sup>31</sup> Polyamorous relationships<sup>32</sup> are also promoted and graphic advice is provided on how to engage in oral and manual sex and how to maximise pleasure.

Scarleteen provides message boards for communication as well as real-time messaging with staff and volunteers providing sex advice to children and adolescents. Given the site’s content, such as detailed advice for teens on how to tie up a sex partner, it would not seem possible to ensure that the staff and some users of the site would not represent a danger to children.

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<sup>27</sup> <https://minus18.org.au/index.php/resources/seek-support>, accessed 7/2/2016.

<sup>28</sup> <http://www.scarleteen.com/> accessed 6/1/2016.

<sup>29</sup> [http://www.scarleteen.com/article/sexuality/diy\\_sex\\_toys\\_the\\_partnered\\_edition](http://www.scarleteen.com/article/sexuality/diy_sex_toys_the_partnered_edition), accessed 6/1/2016.

<sup>30</sup> [http://www.scarleteen.com/article/bodies/toy\\_queries](http://www.scarleteen.com/article/bodies/toy_queries), accessed 6/1/2016.

<sup>31</sup> [http://www.scarleteen.com/article/sexuality/diy\\_sex\\_toys\\_selflove\\_edition](http://www.scarleteen.com/article/sexuality/diy_sex_toys_selflove_edition), accessed 20/12/2015.

<sup>32</sup> <http://www.scarleteen.com/ecards>, accessed 6/1/2016.

SSCA material<sup>33</sup> recommends groups and websites that students may find “a useful starting point”.

One of these is the website and contact details of the Seahorse Club Victoria which recommends the nightclub/fetish club Abode as a “TG friendly venue” which is located at the same physical address as the sadomasochistic venue The Parlour Lounge<sup>34,35,36</sup>. The Parlour Lounge features sex rooms (“intimate play areas”) (Figure 4).

The websites of both the Parlour Lounge and the organisation Blue After Glow<sup>37</sup>, which operates Abode, are pornographic in nature. When accessing the Parlour Lounge website, its front page does say:

“ADULT CONTENT:

THIS SITE REQUIRES YOU TO BE OVER THE AGE OF 18 TO CONTINUE.” However, a student only has to click on the “YES I AM OVER 18 YEARS OF AGE” button to access the site.

SSCA promotional materials aimed at students<sup>38</sup> as a student handout from the SSCA teaching resource *All of Us*<sup>39</sup> direct students to Twenty10, which is an LGBT organisation that works with people of all ages. In January 2016 Twenty10 hosted a “hands-on” sadomasochistic/sex toy workshop for youth<sup>40</sup> (Figure 5). Another SSCA supporter organisation<sup>41</sup>, the AIDS Council of NSW (ACON), co-hosted this workshop which is advertised in the “youth” section of the twenty10 website.

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33 Aizura, A. Z., Walsh, J., Pike, A., Ward, R., Jak, *Gender Questioning, 2011*, Trans Melbourne Gender Project, GLHV, Rainbow Network Victoria, <http://www.safeschoolscoalition.org.au/uploads/41786dc83c65fe280bf3e6728d66cc4b.pdf>, (page 19) accessed 7/1/2016.

34 <https://www.facebook.com/ABODE.Club/posts/10152900279058318>, accessed 6/1/2012.

35 <http://theparlourlounge.com.au/about/>, accessed 6/1/2012.

36 <http://www.bluafterglow.com/home.asp>, accessed 7/2/2016.

37 <http://www.bluafterglow.com/>, accessed 8/2/2016.

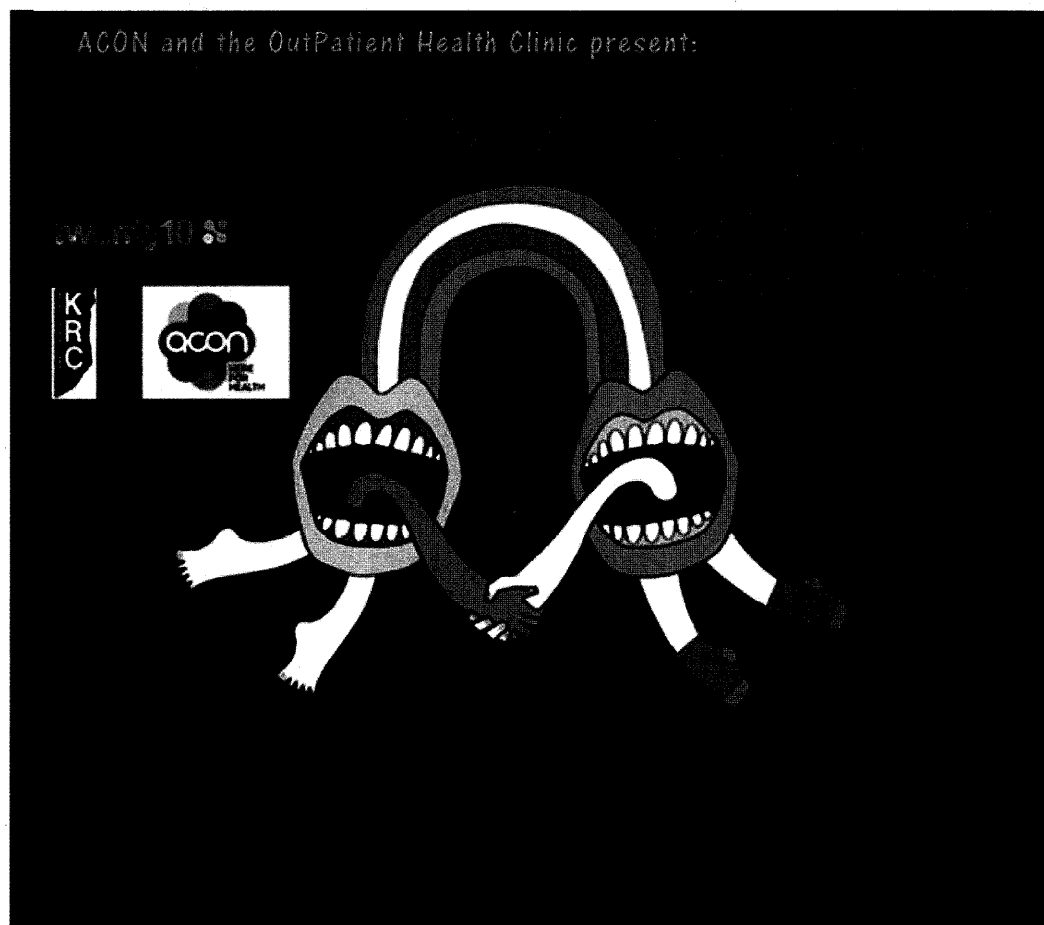
38 OMG im queer, <http://www.safeschoolscoalition.org.au/uploads/1c319a8803b891fac1c455e6b87affa6.pdf>, accessed 31/1/2016.

39 All of Us Teaching Resource, <http://www.safeschoolscoalition.org.au/all-of-us#download-resources>, accessed 31/1/2016.

40 <http://www.twenty10.org.au/youth>, accessed 31/1/2016.

41 <http://www.safeschoolscoalition.org.au/our-supporters/organisations>, accessed 2/2/2016.

## Claude: Safe Play Workshop



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](mailto:rebecca@twenty10.org.au)

Figure 5. Screenshot from the “youth” section of the Twenty10 website.

The GLBT organisation Working It Out<sup>42</sup> is directly involved in implementing the SSCA program in Tasmania and students are directed to Working It Out in a number of SSCA materials<sup>43,44</sup>. Working It Out recommends<sup>45</sup> students view YouTube channels such as “PrincessJoules”<sup>46</sup> and “Uppercase Chase”<sup>47</sup> which feature sex toys and sexually explicit transgender content with video titles such as “Gay Guy Sees First Transgender Vagina” (Figure 8), “Anal for FTMs” and “Fuze ‘Ultra Dildo’ Review!”.



**Figure 8.** Screenshot from the “PrincessJoules” YouTube video entitled *Gay Guy Sees First Transgender Vagina*.

42 <http://www.workingitout.org.au/>, accessed 7/1/2012.

43 *All of Us*, teaching resource, <http://www.safeschoolscoalition.org.au/app/theme/default/design/assets/all-of-us/documents/student-handouts.pdf>, accessed 2/2/2016.

44 *OMG im Queer*, <http://www.safeschoolscoalition.org.au/uploads/1c319a8803b891fac1c455e6b87affa6.pdf>, accessed 2/2/2016.

45 <http://static1.1.sqspcdn.com/static/f/1262237/26719177/1449444366130/Zine+template+with+inserted+articles+vFINA+L+v1.1.pdf?token=JHx0UW6LoSae8bWP5peHyRH4YDM%3D>, p.9, accessed 7/1/2016.

46 [https://www.youtube.com/results?search\\_query=princessjoules](https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=princessjoules), accessed 7/1/2012.

47 [https://www.youtube.com/results?search\\_query=uppercase+chase](https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=uppercase+chase), accessed 7/1/2012.

The SSCA program in NSW is delivered by Family Planning NSW and a student handout in the SSCA teaching resource *All of Us* recommends Family Planning NSW to students. The Family Planning NSW Facebook page<sup>48</sup>, accessible from their website, can contain posts which are inappropriate for students and young people. Such as “You can actually give your valentine a chocolate in the shape of your buttohole” (Figure 9) and a post featuring cupcakes with vulva shaped icing.

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<sup>48</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/familyplanningnsw/?fref=ts>, accessed 2/2/2016.



### 3.4.2 SSCA resources recommend to students organisations linked with sex clubs and LGBT nightclubs

SSCA material directs students for information and social support to organisations that are closely associated with venues that provide entertainment of a sexual nature. As mentioned earlier, the SSCA booklet *Gender Questioning* directs students to The Seahorse Club Victoria which, in addition to recommending the fetish club Abode (“the home of all things wicked”<sup>49</sup>), is sponsored<sup>50</sup> by the associated sadomasochistic sex club The Parlour Room which is located at the same address as Abode and features extreme sexual entertainment and rooms for sex. The website for The Parlour Room is highly pornographic, featuring an image of a naked woman tied to a wooden cross. This club represents a dangerous environment for young people and is a venue that is highly likely to attract predators. The Seahorse Club Victoria website provides a list of “TG friendly venues”<sup>51</sup> which include gay bars and LGBT nightclubs in Melbourne such as DT’s Hotel and Priscillas.

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49 <http://www.bluafterglow.com/entity.asp>, accessed 8/2/2016.

50 [http://seahorsevic.com.au/main/?page\\_id=176](http://seahorsevic.com.au/main/?page_id=176), accessed 8/2/2016.

51 [http://seahorsevic.com.au/main/?page\\_id=213](http://seahorsevic.com.au/main/?page_id=213), accessed 2/2/2016.

Minus18 is effectively an extension of SSCA and creates SSCA materials. Minus18 is an event partner<sup>52</sup> with the GH Hotel in St Kilda, which frequently provides highly erotic gay and lesbian-oriented entertainment such as “Boylesque”<sup>53</sup> (Figure 10). According to its Google profile<sup>54</sup>, the GH Hotel is gay friendly and features “private booths”. Is it placing students at serious risk for SSCA to direct them to organisations which link to this scene and its associated online communities?

It is important to note that the SSCA program provides, directly or indirectly, links to organisations which are applying in practice the ideas that both children are autonomous and adults need to recognise that children have the capacity to make informed, consensual decisions about having sex.<sup>55</sup>

### 3.4.3 Risks involved in connecting students to adult groups outside of school

At a time when schools are desperately trying to devise and implement policies concerning cyber security and child protection to ensure the safety of students, SSCA is providing links for students to connect with various external gay sex groups and access numerous websites, online forums and social networking sites promoting pornography, sex aids and more. This raises questions about child-protection concerns.

The SSCA program contains considerable highly sexual content, that can desensitise children to both discussing and engaging in a wide range of sexual behaviours.

The SSCA program creates environments and situations both inside and outside of school that can put individual children in contact with adults.

CASAC Inc. is a New South Wales peak body for community-based services providing child sexual assault counseling and support services to children, young people and adults, and their non-offending family members.<sup>56</sup> Grooming is activity aimed at establishing a relationship with a child for the purpose of facilitating sexual activity at a later time<sup>57</sup>. CASAC’s “Grooming Fact Sheet”<sup>58</sup> describes the process of grooming. After the identification of an emotionally vulnerable child the

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<sup>52</sup> <https://minus18.org.au/index.php/about-us/parents-workers-2>, accessed 7/2/2016.

<sup>53</sup> <http://ghhotel.com.au/weeknights/friday-nights/>, accessed 2/2/2016.

<sup>54</sup> <https://www.google.com.au/webhp?sourceid=chrome-instant&ion=1&espv=2&ie=UTF-8#q=gh%20hotel>, accessed 1/2/2016.

<sup>55</sup> “When are you Ready to Do It?”, 1/10/12, <https://minus18.org.au/index.php/sex-love/item/109-doing-it>, accessed 6/1/2016.

<sup>56</sup> <http://www.casac.org.au/aboutus.html>, accessed 3/2/2016.

<sup>57</sup> <http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/grooming+offence>, accessed 9/1/2016.

<sup>58</sup> “Grooming Fact Sheet”, CASAC Inc.: NSW child sexual-assault counseling peak body, <http://www.casac.org.au/site%20docs/Grooming.pdf>, accessed 9/1/2016.

process tends to involve a number of characteristic behaviours on the part of the perpetrator, which include:

- Sexualisation of the relationship through conversation and exposure of the child to sexual material such as images.
- Taking undue interest in the child's sexual development.
- Assuring the child of the “rightness” of what they are doing.
- Telling the child the acts will not hurt them.
- Alienate the child from their parents and family so that they do not feel close to them.
- Shaping the child’s sexual preferences and manipulating what the child finds exciting.

(Summarised from CASAC “Grooming Fact Sheet”)

SSCA focuses intensely on sexual development, sexual attractions, sexual behaviours and sexual identity. Students are assured that various sexual acts are acceptable, normal and safe. As a result, children and adolescents risk being desensitised to sexual material while a wider array of sexual behaviours are treated as normal. Further, SSCA provides materials that offer links for students to adult groups that identify by virtue of their sexual activity.

### **3.5 Government funding of Safe Schools Coalition Australia**

SSCA receives funding from the Australian Government and in Victoria from the Victorian Government.

Federal funding of \$8 million was granted to SSCA in August 2013 during the final days of the Rudd Labor Government. The justification for the funding was the prevention of homophobic bullying. An Australian Labor Party media release<sup>59</sup> from Penny Wong (Minister for Finance and Deregulation), Bill Shorten (Minister for Education), Cath Bowtell (Candidate for Melbourne) stated:

“Federal Labor will continue to take a stand against all forms of bullying with an \$8 million investment to help stop homophobia and create more inclusive school communities.

“This funding will be provided to Foundation for Young Australians to expand its Safe Schools Coalition program nationally, delivering training and providing resources and consultancy support to schools across the country.”

The Federal funding of SSCA has been continued under the Coalition Government.

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<sup>59</sup> ALP Media Release, “\$8 Million to Help Stop Homophobia in Schools”, August 30, 2013, [http://www.alp.org.au/cm13\\_300813](http://www.alp.org.au/cm13_300813), accessed 30/1/2016.

The Victorian Government provides additional funding to Safe Schools Coalition Victoria, with \$1.04 million committed to SSCV in the Victorian Government's 2015-2016 Budget<sup>60</sup>. According to the SSCA website, the additional funding will be increased over the next four years and will be used to implement the SSCA program across all Victorian Government secondary schools<sup>61</sup>.

It is unclear how much funding the NSW Government provides to SSCA. SSCA supporters include various NSW government-funded organisations such as the Department of Education, the AIDS Council of NSW (ACON) and the Northern Sydney Local Health District program Youth Health Promotion. The SSCA program is delivered in NSW by Family Planning NSW which receives NSW Government funding.

### **3.6 Case Study of a 'Safe' School: Wollongong High School of the Performing Arts**

The following observations were made at Wollongong High School of the Performing Arts (WHSPA) during October 2015. The activity of a small number of activist teachers implementing SSCA at this school ensures that students are targeted regularly with messages of sexuality and gender identity across multiple subjects and school activities.

The SSCA program is not mentioned in the WHSPA Anti-Bullying Policy<sup>62</sup>. Without searching through the archive of school newsletters, parents considering sending their child to the school would not be able to tell from the school website that it is a member school of SSCA. This is particularly concerning when it is considered that the SSCA program is encouraging students to become involved with adult GLBT groups without their parents' knowledge or consent.

In accordance with SSCA recommendations, WHSPA provides a school environment where the GLBT agenda is all pervasive: sexuality issues are studied, celebrated and imposed both within the classroom and through various extracurricular activities. Examples include:

- A weekly Gender and Sexual Diversity (GSD) lunchtime group is hosted by the LGBTQI Coordinator. The group is advertised around the school.
- Various LGBT posters are displayed around the school. There is a large notice board completely dedicated to LGBT information. Slogans include: "Some girls like other girls, some guys like other guys, some people like both ..."

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60 <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/news/budgetbrochure2015-16.pdf>

61 <http://www.safeschoolscoalition.org.au/new-state-funding-to-expand-safe-schools-coalition-victoria-1>

62 <http://www.wollongong-h.schools.nsw.edu.au/documents/988161/1000164/BULLYING%20AND%20HARRASSMENT%20POLICY%202015.pdf>.

- “Wear It Purple Day” was celebrated for the third time at WHSPA<sup>63</sup> on September 9, 2015. Students were encouraged to wear purple or rainbow-coloured clothing to show their support for the GLBT cause effectively recruiting students to support a political cause. The school’s “GLBTIQ support group” raised \$700 on the day.
- About 40 new LGBT books were purchased using funds raised on “Wear It Purple Day” and many of these are displayed at the library entrance. The books are specially labeled with a white dot on the spine with the school newsletter stating “Libraries can often play an important role for LGBTQ individuals looking to find information about coming out, health, and family topics”<sup>64</sup>. The newsletter does not inform parents that the genres of teen lesbian romance, teen transgender romance and LGBT political activism are featured among the new books. Titles include:
  - i. *LGBTQ Youth and Education: Policies and Practices* (2014), by Chris Mayo, which is an in-depth description of strategies for LGBT political activism in schools, focusing on creating political networks and linking gay rights to racism issues.
  - ii. *For Today I Am a Boy* (2014), by Kim Fu, is a novel that relates the experiences of a boy who believes he is a girl. His experience with masochistic lovers is included.
  - iii. *Annie on My Mind* (1982), is a lesbian romance featuring two 17-year-old girls. The story also involves a teacher of one of the girls who is also in a lesbian relationship.

Within the classroom sexuality and gender issues are discussed and studied at length. This sexual agenda is forced on students across multiple subjects. For example, Year 12 studied the film *Billy Elliot*, which explores homosexuality, homophobia and gender; while Year 10 analysed a film clip from *Bowling for Columbine*, featuring Marilyn Manson, who tends to often present himself in sexual poses where his gender appears ambiguous. One classroom features posters depicting various families, including a lesbian couple.

### 3.6.1 Promotion of external LGBT groups and activities at WHSPA

A particularly concerning element of the SSCA program at Wollongong High School of the Performing Arts (WHSPA) is the promotion of external GLBT groups and activities. At WHSPA the following external GLBT organisations are promoted to students on various posters:

63 [http://www.wollongong-h.schools.nsw.edu.au/cmsresources/wollongong-high-school/misc/2015/10/issue\\_10\\_october\\_highnotes\\_1445559604071.pdf](http://www.wollongong-h.schools.nsw.edu.au/cmsresources/wollongong-high-school/misc/2015/10/issue_10_october_highnotes_1445559604071.pdf), accessed 1/2/2016.

64 [http://www.wollongong-h.schools.nsw.edu.au/cmsresources/wollongong-high-school/misc/2015/11/issue\\_11\\_november\\_highnotes\\_1447795070478.pdf](http://www.wollongong-h.schools.nsw.edu.au/cmsresources/wollongong-high-school/misc/2015/11/issue_11_november_highnotes_1447795070478.pdf), accessed 1/2/2016.

- The University of Wollongong Allsorts Queer Collective<sup>65</sup> is a university club aimed at adults. This club holds events such as a talk on “Gay Witchcraft”, an open party titled “Genderfuck” (Figure 11), a Fair Day featuring a “lube slide”, trips to Sydney’s gay bars and participation in Mardi Gras.
- Twenty10 is based in Chippendale, Sydney, and organises various events and projects within the GLBT community, only some of which are aimed at youth.
- The University of Wollongong Ally Network<sup>66</sup> is an organisation for adults aimed at University of Wollongong staff. It is an initiative of the UOW Employment Equity and Diversity team and seminars are held at the university.
- “Rainbow League” is a GLBT youth group held fortnightly and hosted by Headspace Wollongong Youth Services and Wollongong City Council. Although the age group 16–25 is given on the poster (Figure 13), their webpage<sup>67</sup> appears to suggest that the group is open to ages 12–25, which would include children (Figure 12).
- A performance about LGBTIQ history at Wollongong Youth Centre entitled “What is it like today? What was it like back then?” This event was hosted by Wollongong Playback Theatre and Wollongong City Council.
- A gay issues writing workshop, “SAGA: Sexuality and Gender Awareness”, was hosted by Headspace Wollongong and South Coast Writers Centre.
- “Let’s talk about acceptance”: a six-week discussion group hosted by Shellharbour Youth Services.

These examples again raise serious concerns as some of these groups are adult groups not at all intended for school children; and yet they are advertised without parental knowledge and tend to be branded as places where individuals can find acceptance and companionship.

High-school students who might be struggling to fit in with their peers or who are in an emotionally vulnerable state may be attracted by this promise of unconditional acceptance. It is particularly concerning given the context of the “Safe School” environment, where the students have been presented a diet of highly sexualised information and encouraged to focus on their sexuality.

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65 <https://www.facebook.com/events/178567425630309/permalink/178567428963642/>, accessed 1/2/2016.

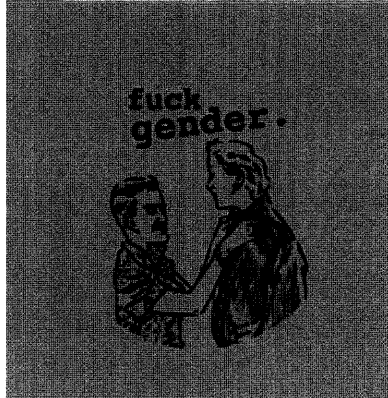
66 <https://www.facebook.com/uowally/>

67 <http://headspace.us9.list-manage.com/subscribe?u=2c2d5102882190ef96d99ab0e&id=2363c15255>, accessed 1/2/2016.

## Allsorts - Wollongong University Queer Collective

"Beers for Queers" is on THIS Tuesday night at 5:30, in the Uni bar, look for the rainbow koala.

Gender F\* Saturday June 6th



Queers Gather!!!  
End of session 1 is here so come party with some queers  
Genderfuck is a party where you can fuck up with gender or not. Do whatever the fuck you want.  
You are welcome and encouraged to bring other non UOW queer people 😊

It will be held at the UOW - URAC Sports Lounge with a 7:35 start  
BYO Alcohol  
Light snacks provided

Figure 11. Screenshot from the Facebook page of the University of Wollongong Allsorts Queer

## Rainbow League mailing list signup form

Sign up to the Rainbow League mailing list to receive group reminders (around once per fortnight), and info on upcoming events, groups, opportunities, competitions and more, delivered straight to your inbox by the team at headspace Wollongong and Wollongong Youth Services.

First Name

Last Name

Email Address

Postcode

I am a...

- ☒ Young Person aged 12-25 years
- ☐ Family or Friend
- ☐ Organisation or Service Provider
- ☐ School or Educational Institution

Figure 12. Screenshot from the Headspace Rainbow League website.



**Figure 13.** Rainbow League poster displayed at Wollongong High School of the Performing Arts.



### **3.7 Case study: no choice to “opt out” forces parent to take child out of SSCA member school**

Parents do not have the choice of giving their child permission to opt out of the SSCA program in the same way that they can opt out of other school programs such as Scripture classes (Special Religious Education classes)<sup>68</sup>. The SSCA program is designed to be embedded throughout all curricula and school activities. The following is a letter from a parent who was forced to remove her child from a SSCA member school.

Hi there,

I just wanted to let you know my son & daughter's high school (Frankston High School) has just recently taken on the Safe Schools Curriculum. Roughly eight weeks after it was introduced, my son was sitting in science class and the roll monitor dropped a message off for the science teacher to read to the entire class (and the rest of the school I'm assuming). It was applauding the kids for their uniform compliance in 2015. The message then went on to say that all children can wear the uniform of their choice in 2016, meaning girls can wear the boys' uniform and boys can wear the school dress if they feel like it. This in my view is cross-dressing encouragement, it's reckless for the school to be making announcements like this. The students would not have been thinking anything about this, they were in science class! How dare the school take this upon themselves without parents' knowledge.

Before Safe Schools Coalition was implemented, the school already had a student wellbeing officer, chaplain, social worker, councilor, caring teachers/staff, an anti-bullying program, LGBT support group and the ability to refer students for outside help when needed. I don't see why this huge change in curriculum and culture is necessary with its questionable blanket approach.

I have asked the school to refrain from discussing gender theory to my children because it simply goes against my beliefs and my children have special needs. However, they are not listening, in fact they're quite condescending. I demand an “opt out” option, which Joel Radcliffe at Safe Schools Coalition confirms is not available.

My son has learning challenges and is dealing with a life-threatening illness daily, and has also been bullied himself. The Safe Schools Coalition claims that the purpose of their program is to stop bullying, but they are only focused on promoting LGBT issues and do nothing for other students who are bullied. Some of the resources that are currently being used to promote the LGBT agenda in schools could be used to provide much-needed learning support for students with disabilities.

I was told by the principal that his school is not political and when I say that this is “gay and transgender activism” brought into their classrooms, the vice-principal gets angry and defensive. The school is not hearing me; they treat me as though my feelings and opinions on the matter are unworthy and irrelevant. We have to leave the school now, as it's no longer safe for students. It's extremely sad because my children are second-generation

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<sup>68</sup> [https://www.det.nsw.edu.au/policies/curriculum/schools/spec\\_religious/REimplementproced.pdf](https://www.det.nsw.edu.au/policies/curriculum/schools/spec_religious/REimplementproced.pdf), accessed 3/2/2016.

Frankston High School students and we love the school dearly. I've always had my children in public schools; unfortunately we've now been forced to move them to a Catholic system (we are not Catholic) and this will have a huge impact on their disability funding and support, so I am told. My youngest daughter is "day blind" and I would rather her education be kept to the public system, however, this is no longer possible.

I will keep spreading the word because not many parents know about Safe Schools Coalition, but it comes at great cost to me personally. I've been attacked on social media for my views, however, I know most of these people haven't actually reviewed the dangerous, excessively sexual, age-inappropriate and far too graphic content of Safe Schools' online material.

I also notice that in Australia it's impossible to find good quality treatment for gender-confused students. It seems that even The Royal Children's Hospital in Melbourne is treating children with dangerous puberty blocking hormones and affirming their behaviour. I'm interested to know why they ignore the longitudinal studies done by the world-renowned Johns Hopkins Hospital in America and the Karolinska Institute in Sweden. Many studies verify that most children grow out of their gender confusion when left to do so.

In my exit letter to the school I'd like the teachers to know that there's other ways in which to help these children without the LGBTI lobby dictating the treatment. It would be helpful to let schools know where to refer gender-confused students safely, but I can't find anywhere here in Oz. It may help to have psychiatrists who are brave enough to speak out and agree with Dr Paul McHugh to help with this.

Concerned mother of 4,  
Cella White,  
Victoria.

## **4 ARCSHS research was used to justify Safe Schools**

The Safe Schools Coalition program is underpinned by the research and lobbying of the Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society (ARCSHS), at La Trobe University in Melbourne. Academics from the ARCSHS have been involved in writing materials for the SSCA program.

The ARCSHS was established in 1993 and has consistently produced research that is based on the premise that expression of all forms of sexuality and sexual behavior, including that of young teenagers, is a right that must be promoted.

The ARCSHS has focused on driving social change through influencing government policy, especially education policy.

In order to implement Safe Schools Coalition Victoria (SSCV) and SSCA it was necessary to demonstrate that the bullying of same-sex attracted students was a significant problem in schools and that a considerable number of SSA youth were likely to be the victims of bullying in many or all schools.

## 4.1 The false ARCSHS claim that “10% of youth are same-sex attracted”

ARCSHS has widely promoted the statistic that 10% of Australian youth are same-sex attracted. This figure is based on various ARCSHS studies which were mainly not peer reviewed and were based on non-representative samples and often presented results in a misleading way. The figure of 10% is used in Safe Schools Coalition Australia official resources<sup>69,70,71</sup>. It can be found in a number of government documents<sup>72 73 74 75 76 77</sup> and government websites<sup>78 79 80 81</sup> which reference ARCSHS research; and 10% is quoted in newspaper articles<sup>82 83</sup> concerning ARCSHS research.

69 “Safe Schools Do Better” (p6), Safe Schools Coalition Australia official resource, 2013, <http://www.safeschoolscoalition.org.au/safe-schools-do-better>, accessed 22/12/2015.

70 “Stand Out”, Safe Schools Coalition Australia official resource, p.8, <http://www.safeschoolscoalition.org.au/stand-out>, accessed 22/12/2015.

71 *OMG my friends queer*, Safe Schools Coalition Australia official resource, p.11, <http://www.safeschoolscoalition.org.au/uploads/2dd9051c41af2766cacf2b3b0fccd00b.pdf>, accessed 26/12/2015.

72 “Supporting Sexual Diversity in Schools, 2008”, Student Wellbeing & Health Support Division Office for Government School Education Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, p.5.

73 *What’s the Difference? Health Issues of Major Concern to Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (GLBTI) Victorians*, p.11, 2002, Ministerial Advisory Committee on Gay and Lesbian Health, published by the Victorian Government Department of Human Services.

74 Marc Newhouse, “Challenging sexuality & gender based bullying in schools”, PowerPoint Presentation, slide 5, Western Australia Equal Opportunity Commission, [https://www.google.com.au/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=13&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0ahUKewiio-GgiezJAhXhJaYKHX0IApw4ChAWCCYwAg&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.hrc.act.gov.au%2Fres%2FLGBTI%2520SCHOOL%2520PROJECT%2520CANBERRA%2520MN.ppt&usq=AFQjCNF6vxevnSuio7CDub7AdanFi\\_SpkQ&sig2=Bu4wXiGvflUkU50xy3PtQQ](https://www.google.com.au/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=13&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0ahUKewiio-GgiezJAhXhJaYKHX0IApw4ChAWCCYwAg&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.hrc.act.gov.au%2Fres%2FLGBTI%2520SCHOOL%2520PROJECT%2520CANBERRA%2520MN.ppt&usq=AFQjCNF6vxevnSuio7CDub7AdanFi_SpkQ&sig2=Bu4wXiGvflUkU50xy3PtQQ), accessed 21/12/2015.

75 Lynne Hillier, “In the too hard basket”: how to deal with homophobic violence in schools, slide 36, undated, ARCSHS La Trobe University, VicHealth.

76 Debbie Ollis, Anne Mitchell, Jan Watson, Lynne Hillier & Jenny Walsh, “Safety in our schools: strategies for responding to homophobia”, p.2, ARCSHS, La Trobe University and VicHealth, date of publication not provided.

77 Liz Alexander, “Creating safe schools: the role of partnerships between parents and schools in supporting sexual and gender diversity”, p.4, 2003, produced by the SSAFE (Same Sex Attracted Friendly Environments) in Schools Project, Family Planning Victoria; funded by the Victorian Premier’s Drug Prevention Council and VicHealth.

78 “Same-sex attracted friendly environments. Research: Some key findings”, (Adapted from Family Planning Victoria’s ssafeschools website), <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/school/teachers/teachingresources/social/physed/ssafefindings.pdf>, accessed 20/12/2015.

79 Australian Human Rights Commission Website, <https://bullying.humanrights.gov.au/lesbian-gay-bisexual-trans-and-intersex-equality-1>, accessed 21/12/2015.

ARCSHS research also formed the justification for the NSW Government's trial of the Proud Schools Program, launched in 2010.<sup>84</sup> The NSW Department of Education and Communities subsequently gave its support to the SSCA program, which was rolled out in 2014 with support from the Federal Government.<sup>85</sup>

Given the grossly inaccurate nature of the ARCSHS research used to justify these programs, serious questions arise about allowing and implementing SSCA and Proud Schools.

#### 4.1.1 “10%” in ARCSHS lobbying

The fact that the 10% statistic has become so widely accepted is due to the lobbying and marketing of ARCSHS. ARCSHS staff have commented widely on their lobbying strategies and political connections. They identified the safety theme (e.g. “Safe” Schools) as an effective marketing strategy:

“The marketing of this research was consciously directed towards creating and supporting processes of social change. ... The safety paradigm endowed the cause with respectability; anyone could get behind such a banner without fear of suspicion and criticism. In short it removed seemingly insurmountable blockages to action and cleared the way for social change”<sup>86</sup>

ARCSHS researcher Lynne Hillier described their extensive lobbying:

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80 Australian Government Department of Health website, <http://health.gov.au/internet/publications/publishing.nsf/Content/drugtreat-pubs-front2-wk-toc~drugtreat-pubs-front2-wk-secb~drugtreat-pubs-front2-wk-secb-3~drugtreat-pubs-front2-wk-secb-3-4>, accessed 21/12/2015.

81 NSW Government Education website: Teaching Sexual Health, <http://www.learning.schools.nsw.edu.au/teachingsexualhealth/inclusive/same-sex-attracted-and-gender-diverse-students/> accessed 21/12/2015.

82 Denise Ryan, “Young, gay and caught in a conspiracy of silence”, *The Age*, April 9, 2010, <http://www.theage.com.au/national/education/young-gay-and-caught-in-a-conspiracy-of-silence-20100409-rxot.html> accessed 21/12/2015.

83 Denise Ryan, “School formals: a time for celebration not discrimination”, *The Age*, 11/11/2010, <http://www.theage.com.au/it-pro/school-formals-a-time-for-celebration-not-discrimination-20101110-17nmb>, accessed 21/12/2015.

84 Miranda Devine, “Being straight no longer normal”, *The Daily Telegraph*, October 17, 2012, <http://www.heraldsun.com.au/news/being-straight-no-longer-normal-students-taught/story-e6frf7jo-1226497360980>, accessed 15/1/2016.

85 P. Fu, “Anti-homophobia program will not be extended”, *School Governance*, <http://www.schoolgovernance.net.au/2015/01/15/anti-homophobia-program-will-not-be-extended/>, accessed 15/1/2016.

86 Lynne Hillier, Alina Turner, Anne Mitchell, *Writing Themselves in Again: 6 Years on*, p.2, Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health & Society, La Trobe University, 2005.

“We lobbied and lobbied and lobbied and lobbied the Victorian Education Department [with the research] slowly but surely making contacts, finding champions within.”<sup>87</sup>

Hillier outlines some of the ARCSHS lobbying activities in a presentation entitled “In the too hard basket”.<sup>88</sup>

- They “had the ear of the Minister of Health” through their involvement in the Ministerial Advisory Committee on Gay and Lesbian Health which was established in 2000. The Department of Education was also represented on the committee.
- The Department of Education was given a pre-launch briefing of *Writing Themselves in Again*, “which this time supplies them with a welcome mandate for action”.
- As an outcome of their lobbying the Department of Education released a policy statement, “Safe Schools are Effective Schools”, ran a conference on sexual diversity in schools and began writing a statement on professional practice to all principals.
- Another outcome of their efforts was that same-sex attracted youth were mentioned in Premier and Cabinet Social Policy for Victoria.

Throughout 2010 and 2011 Hillier gave a series of presentations on same-sex attracted school students and bullying to various government and community organisations. Presentations were given at a parliamentary forum, meetings of Department of Education staff in NSW and ACT, a Rainbow Labor meeting, and meetings of primary and secondary school teachers.<sup>89</sup>

Hillier wrote in an internationally circulated newsletter<sup>90</sup> about her successful efforts to instigate a movement for social change in Australia:

“The national research gave a statistical base and legitimacy to arguments about the rights of SSAY and provided a rallying point for social change, which in 2003 is still gaining momentum. In particular, the research and the movement that followed have moved discussion away from concerns about sexual morality to a focus on young people’s rights to safety and education in an inclusive and supportive environment.” (Lynne Hillier)

Hillier goes on to comment that ARCSHS research had provided the justification for the funding of a “plethora” of projects in Victoria aimed at same-sex attracted youth.

Anne Mitchell was a founding member of ARCSHS in 1993 and was appointed the inaugural Deputy Chair of the Victorian Ministerial Advisory Committee on Gay and Lesbian Health in 2000. Her research interests include policy reform. She set up and managed the Community Liaison and

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87 Audio file, [http://www.pridenz.com/apog\\_lynne\\_hillier.html](http://www.pridenz.com/apog_lynne_hillier.html), accessed 22/12/2015.

88 Lynne Hillier, “In the too hard basket: how to deal with homophobic violence in schools”, undated, ARCSHS, La Trobe University.

89 Staff profile of Lynne Hillier, <http://www.latrobe.edu.au/she/staff/profile?uname=lhillier>

90 Lynne Hillier, “From the moral to the safety arena: Positive paradigm change in research and practice with same-sex attracted young people in Australia”, SRA Newsletter, Society for Research on Adolescents, Spring 2003, [http://www.s-r-a.org/sites/default/files/nwsspring\\_2003.pdf](http://www.s-r-a.org/sites/default/files/nwsspring_2003.pdf), accessed 22/12/2015.

Education Unit at ARCSHS with the objective of transferring centre research into policy and practice<sup>91</sup>. She has been central to much of the research that has been used to justify safe schools.

In a news article<sup>92</sup> Anne Mitchell related how Lynne Hillier and herself had utilised the 10% figure to influence school education:

“All of a sudden schools knew that around 10 per cent of the population were same-sex attracted. You know, back then we just did it as fast as we could and as quietly as we could and once we had that data, we made a lot of noise.” (Anne Mitchell)

#### 4.1.2 “10%” in ARCSHS research

ARCSHS has used a number of studies going back as far as 1996 to support their claim that 10% of Australian young people are same sex attracted. Each of these studies is dealt with below beginning with the most recent study; The 5th National Survey of Australian Secondary Students and Sexual Health. Within these studies and the ARCSHS documents that quote them a number of misleading techniques have been used to arrive at this claim:

1. False referencing and misquoting of both their own studies and those of others.
2. Use of misleading and unconventional definitions of “same sex attracted” such as the inclusion of 12 year olds who indicate that they are “unsure” of their attractions as same sex attracted.
3. Self-contradiction within reports.
4. Exaggeration.
5. Use of statistically non-representative samples (often due to biased survey recruitment methods) whilst claiming otherwise.
6. Highly misleading descriptions of study methodology.

##### 4.1.2.1 The 5th National Survey of Australian Secondary Students and Sexual Health

Funded by the Australian Government Department of Health, the “5th National Survey of Australian Secondary Students and Sexual Health<sup>93</sup>” was released only months before the launch and

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91 Staff profile for Anne Mitchell, <http://www.latrobe.edu.au/she/staff/profile?uname=aemitchell>, accessed 22/12/2015.

92 Benn Dorrington, “Gay youth research pioneer retires”, *Star Observer*, November 1, 2012, <http://www.starobserver.com.au/news/gay-youth-research-pioneer-retires/88052>, accessed 15/1/2016.

93 Mitchell A, Patrick K, Heywood W, Blackman P, Pitts M. 2014. 5th National Survey of Australian Secondary Students and Sexual Health 2013, (ARCSHS Monograph Series No. 97), Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, La Trobe University, Melbourne, Australia.

national roll out of SSCA in 2014 and is used within SSCA official resources to support the 10% claim.

The booklet *Safe Schools Do Better*<sup>94</sup> is a key piece of SSCA marketing. On page 6 of this booklet, which is entitled “Why we create safe schools”, it is clearly written in poster-size print that “10% of students are same-sex attracted” with the “5<sup>th</sup> National Survey” provided as the supporting reference. Even if the biased sampling methods are ignored, the results of the survey in no way support the much-reported 10% claim. (The results were in fact even more unrealistic, indicating that 16.8% of the respondents were same-sex attracted, with 11.2% experiencing bisexual attraction and 5.6% experiencing homosexual attraction).

While the four previous National Surveys had utilised relatively sound survey methodology to ensure a somewhat representative sample of the Australian secondary-student population, the 5<sup>th</sup> National Survey was drastically different in its lack of proper methodology and recruitment of participants through Facebook and unspecified organisations.

The authors give the impression that rigorous survey methods have been applied in keeping with what would be expected of a “National Survey” funded by the Australian Government. On page 3 the authors state misleadingly that “[t]he methodology used for the 2013 survey was similar to the methodologies used for previous surveys but also adopted some additional strategies”. One “additional strategy” was only subsequently revealed to be the recruitment of over a third of the participants via Facebook and unspecified organisations (of a total of 2136 participants, 775 (36.3%) did not complete the survey at a school).

An extensive internet search was carried out to locate the online sites which promoted the survey. The online advertisement for participation in the survey or web links to the online survey were found on various social networking site that are variously associated with gay activism, polygamy activism, belong to a university club or are pornographic and/or sadomasochistic. The recruiting advertisement or links to the online survey could only be located at these sites:

- The Facebook page of the university club Reproductive Rights UNSW<sup>95</sup>.
- The above Facebook post was shared via the minus18 Facebook site. Minus18 is a gay youth activist organisation and is effectively an extension of SSCA.
- The Tumblr page of “Keep it safe summer”<sup>96</sup>. This text of this advertisement suggested that the researchers had struggled to find sufficient numbers of participants. It also makes the pointed statement that survey responses will be used

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94 *Safe Schools Do Better* (p6), Safe Schools Coalition Australia official resource, 2013, <http://www.safeschoolscoalition.org.au/safe-schools-do-better>, accessed 22/12/2015.

95 <https://www.facebook.com/ReproductiveRightsUNSW/posts/552910961454587>, accessed 15/1/2016.

96 <http://keepitsafesummer.tumblr.com/page/57>, accessed 15/1/2016.

to influence sex education in Australia. This same Tumblr site also promotes gay rights as well as polyamory, sadomasochism and sex toys.

- The Facebook page of the WayOut Rural Youth and Sexual Diversity Project.<sup>97</sup> This is clearly a GLBT organisation.
- The Facebook page of ShineSA.<sup>98</sup> This Facebook page also posts LGBT content frequently.
- The Tumblr page of Necromancers-Soul<sup>99</sup> which contains extremely violent and sadomasochistic content.
- The personal Tumblr page of someone who describes himself as bisexual<sup>100</sup>. The post seems to be aimed at an LGBT audience. The page contains homoerotic content. This person reposted from the Necromancers-Soul site mentioned above.
- The Facebook page of a radio sex program<sup>101</sup> which has specifically promoted Minus18 as well as the inclusion of homosexual content in sex education. This Facebook page also promotes LGBT issues and the sex industry. This link was shared on the page by a site visitor.

The fact that the links to the survey can only be located on sites that are either LGBT or sadistic in nature or belong to a university club, suggests that the online recruitment was heavily biased. It is particularly concerning given that the online advertisement seemed to be directed at LGBT activists with potential participants asked to “Help shape the future of Sex Ed in Australia”<sup>102</sup>. This despite the fact that results from this study were used to justify the implementation of SSCA.

The Executive Summary and Introduction of the “5<sup>th</sup> National Survey” give the impression that a valid survey has been conducted using a representative sample of secondary students. The executive summary seems to generalise the results to the wider population of students, drawing conclusions on important matters such as students’ HIV knowledge and the rate of experience of sexual activity.

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<https://www.facebook.com/WayOutVictoria/photos/a.446795985354079.103767.105459482821066/669717979728544/?type=1&theater>, accessed 15/1/2016.

98 <https://www.facebook.com/SHineSAInc/posts/612509992128988>, accessed 15/1/2016.

99 <http://the-necromancers-soul.tumblr.com/post/65214058841/survey-for-australian-students-in-year-10-11-or>, accessed 15/1/2016.

100 <http://pyo-jihooon.tumblr.com/post/65214404632/survey-for-australian-students-in-year-10-11-or>, accessed 15/1/2016.

101 [https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story\\_fbid=10151773461298208&id=51054927001](https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=10151773461298208&id=51054927001), accessed 15/1/2016.

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<https://www.facebook.com/WayOutVictoria/photos/a.446795985354079.103767.105459482821066/669717979728544/?type=1&theater>, accessed 15/1/2016.



On page 3 the misleading impression is given that the online survey was introduced only for use within schools purely as an alternative to the paper and pen survey because “schools may find this methodology easier to administer”. Pages 4-6 make it clear that the online survey was marketed outside of schools via “targeted organisations” using “existing contact networks” and Facebook advertising. However, the organisations are not named and details of the Facebook advertising are not provided. This is in contrast to the level of detail provided regarding the random sampling of schools (this initial description of their intended random sampling method is highly disingenuous as the random sampling regime was later abandoned).

On page 5 the authors make it clear that they were aware that the online survey participants represented a statistically distinct population from the school participants and yet they proceeded to combine the two samples and conduct analyses on the aggregated data set. In fact, other than basic demographic data, no analyses of the survey content are broken down according to school versus online recruitment. Somewhat bizarrely they state that combining the samples provides a “broader representation of Australian school students” (p5).

A disclaimer regarding the reliability of the survey results is provided on page 5:

“Given these methodological changes, the survey results have not been weighted because, although a proportional sampling frame was used initially, random sampling has not been used throughout. Thus, the final sample obtained should be considered a convenience sample and should be interpreted as such.”

Even this statement is disingenuous in that it suggests that the sample used was somewhat random and therefore representative. In fact, the sample used was highly non-random and therefore non-representative.

Another concern is the inclusion of 110 “students” who were recruited outside of schools and did not provide the name of their school (p.7). This number represents 5.1% of the total sample size and it is unclear why these responses were treated as valid data.

It is acknowledged on page 10 that:

“... despite rigorous efforts to ensure that participants were Years 10, 11, or 12 students enrolled at an Australian secondary school (as described above), it is possible that not all completions were conducted by people in this cohort.”

Given that the survey was anonymous and it was not necessary to even provide a school name, the “rigorous effort” seems to consist in providing a button at the beginning of the online survey for participants to click on if they agreed that they were in Years 10, 11 or 12 as described on page 10.

Furthermore, it appears that no effort was taken to avoid one individual completing the online survey multiple times. This issue was not mentioned in the report.

The authors state on page 73 that there was a higher proportion of same-sex attracted young people among the group who were recruited outside of school, though the percentage is not provided. Therefore, it is not surprising that those recruited outside of school overwhelmingly indicated that more gay and lesbian-specific sex education should be provided in schools (p.73). This group also tended to mention that school sex education lacked information on sexual practices including “practices other than penis in vagina sex” such as anal and oral sex. The responses of this group happen to align well with a number of ARCSHS publications regarding sex education in schools.<sup>103</sup>

On page 4 great detail is used in describing a random sampling methodology which refers to the 2008 study and, although appearing involved, fails to provide a true picture of how the current survey was conducted. The following is an excerpt from page 4:

“In all there were 704 schools in this list from all states and territories in Australia, and from all school types (Government, Independent and Catholic) resulting in 686 ‘expression of interest’ letters being sent to school principals in late 2012 asking if they may be interested in receiving an ‘invitation to participate’ in early 2013. This resulted in 62 principals returning a signed document expressing interest, and these schools were subsequently sent further information of the study when relevant state or governing body ethical approval was given.

“Secondly, we created a list of 33 other schools to which principals were sent information about the study. This list was created via informal networks, expressions of interest via the Ansell newsletter, and via targeting of schools with large populations of young men. Overall, 95 school principals were sent documentation throughout 2013 asking if they would agree to their schools’ participation and 41 principals sent back signed informed consent sheets agreeing to their schools’ participation. Fifteen schools withdrew from participating after consent was given.”

A number of anomalies and questions arise from this excerpt:

1. Only 686 Schools out of the sample frame of 704 were sent “expression of interest” letters; meaning 18 schools were not even contacted. No reason is provided for this.
2. The fact that 33 extra schools outside of the random sample were invited to participate – via the Ansell newsletter and by targeting schools with large proportions of younger men – renders the random sampling technique completely irrelevant, especially when the low response rate among random sample schools is considered.

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<sup>103</sup> Hillier, L., Warr, D., & Haste, B. (1996). “The rural mural: sexuality and diversity in rural youth”, Carlton, National Centre in HIV Social Research, La Trobe University.

3. 41 schools provided informed consent and 15 of these subsequently withdrew, leaving 26 participating schools. It is not stated how many (if any) of these 26 schools came from the original random sample.
4. The total number of invited schools should be considered as  $33 + 704 = 737$ . Hence the participation rate of the schools was 26 out of  $737 = 3.5\%$ . A study with such a low response rate would generally be regarded as statistically worthless<sup>104</sup> (Note: This rate is considerably lower again when the non-response of students within schools is considered).

On page 73 the authors do suggest that the school sample was biased with a larger proportion of progressive schools with “comprehensive” sexuality education programs.

Although Table 2.1 on page 7 is entitled “Sample size and participation rate in each state and territory”, the participation rates are neither reported in this table nor anywhere else in the document. While it is possible to calculate the participation rate among schools, insufficient information is provided to calculate the participation rate among students within these schools.

On page 10 it is stated that some schools had “extremely low” numbers of students returning consent forms and that non-participation was likely to create bias in the results as:

“... students with parents who object to research on sexual health for religious or cultural reasons may have been less likely to participate.”

The data from Table 2.1 on page 7 implies that an average of 52 students completed the survey from each participating school. Given that all students in years 10, 11 and 12 were invited to participate in each school, the within-school participation rate is low.

In spite of the various weaknesses of the study the authors conclude that teenagers are “having sex that they enjoy” and that reform of sex education is needed. They concluded:

“Called to question by the study is the quality of that education and these data suggest that this should become the issue of concern for advocates rather than the more common push for mandating.” (p.76)

#### 4.1.2.2 Writing Themselves in Again 2005

The ARCSHS has released three reports in the *Writing Themselves In* series. Each report details the results of a survey of same-sex attracted youth who were recruited mainly through the “gay press”

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<sup>104</sup> Draugalis, J. R., Coons, S. J., Plaza, C. M., “Best Practices for Survey Research Reports: A Synopsis for Authors and Reviewers,” *Am J Pharm Educ.* 2008, Feb 15; 72(1): 11.

and LGBT organisations. The surveys focused on sexual attractions, sexual behaviour, experience of discrimination and drug use. The unusual title apparently refers to the authors' intention to use the reports to create social change.

The second report in the series, *Writing Themselves In Again* was released in 2004 and was pivotal in the marketing and establishment of Safe Schools Coalition Victoria (SSCV), which was the precursor to SSCA. A figure of 10% is used in the report with support neither from any reference nor the results of the report itself. A range of 8% to 11% is mentioned separately with (supposedly) supporting references.

The figure of 10% is first mentioned in the final pages of the report with no reference provided. Fittingly the 10% figure appears in the context of a recommendation for the creation of "safe spaces" in schools. No reference accompanies this statement, which appears in the final pages of the report:

"Schools also have a responsibility to provide a safe space for the 10% of the student population who are same-sex attracted to receive a fully rounded education." (p.84)

The figure of 10% is used again without reference on page 85.

Page 1 of the report states that a figure of 8% to 11% was "established" as a result of two La Trobe University studies. The first study (Hillier, 1996) was entitled "The rural mural: sexuality and diversity in rural youth"<sup>105</sup>. The second study (Lindsay, 1997) was "Secondary students, HIV/AIDS and sexual health"<sup>106</sup>.

(Hillier, 1996) in no way supports a claim that 8% to 11% of young people experience same-sex attraction. The results indicate that 5.1% (59/1168) of respondents experienced same-sex attraction: It is only by including respondents who indicated that they were "unsure" of their sexual attractions that a figure of 11% can be gained:

"Eighty-nine per cent of the respondents were, at the time of the study, attracted only to members of the opposite sex, that is, they felt themselves to be heterosexual. Of the remaining 11%, 6% were unsure, 2% were attracted to both sexes, and 3% were attracted only to people of the same sex." (p.44, Hillier, 1996)

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105 Hillier, L., Warr, D., & Haste, B. (1996). "The rural mural: sexuality and diversity in rural youth", Carlton, National Centre in HIV Social Research, La Trobe University.

106 Lindsay, J., Smith, AMA & Rosenthal, D. (1997), "Secondary students, HIV/AIDS and sexual health", Melbourne, Centre for the Study of STDs, La Trobe University.

When it is considered that some respondents were as young as 12 years old, it is not surprising that a proportion of the respondents indicated that they were “unsure”. To include this group in the same-sex attracted group is seriously misleading.

In addition, (Hillier, 1996) acknowledges bias in the survey due to the participation rate of only 60%, with students from more conservative families less likely to participate in the sexually explicit survey:

“Because of the particularly sensitive nature of this research, many parents and students were cautious about being involved.” (p.13)

(Lindsay, 1997) was the second reference given to support the 8% to 11% figure. In this reference, a figure in the required range can only be gained either by considering a minor subset of students or by grouping students who indicated that they were “unsure” about their sexual attractions with those who said they did experience same-sex attraction.

The percentages of participating students who actually indicated experiencing any same-sex attraction were 5.3% for both males and females in Year 10, and 5.4%, and 8.3%, for males and females respectively, in Year 12.

The authors of (Lindsay, 1997) themselves note that the survey was not representative of the Australian secondary-student population as only government schools were involved and bias was created in the survey as students from culturally diverse and conservative backgrounds were less likely to participate in the sexually explicit study. (p.15)

#### **4.1.2.3 “In the too hard basket: How to deal with homophobic violence in schools”**

The slide presentation “In the too hard basket: How to deal with homophobic violence in schools”<sup>107</sup>, claims to provide “baseline percentages” for the rate of same-sex attraction among young people. The presentation was produced by Lynne Hillier from La Trobe University’s ARCSHS and appears to have been created some time after May 2007. The logos of VicHealth, La Trobe University and the ARCSHS appear on the document. The presentation seems to be geared towards high-school teachers and management.

Slide 36 recommends that school management “assume at least 10% of your students are same-sex attracted”. No supporting reference is provided, although slide three is entitled “Baseline percentages of SSA young people in Australia” and provides five studies with associated percentages. The first two studies were (Hillier, 1996) and (Lindsay, 1997), which were examined

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<sup>107</sup> Lynne Hillier, “In the too hard basket: how to deal with homophobic violence in schools”, undated, ARCSHS, La Trobe University.

above. The remaining three studies were (Smith et al., 2003)<sup>108</sup>, (Hillier, Matthews and Dempsey, 1997)<sup>109</sup> and (Rossiter et al., 2003)<sup>110</sup>. These also fail to provide evidence to justify the 10% assumption.

The presentation claims that in (Smith et al., 2003) it was found that 7% of young people were same-sex attracted. (Smith et al., 2003) actually reported that 5.2% of respondents were attracted to people of the same sex. Again, 7% can be calculated only if students who indicated they were “not sure” are included as same-sex attracted. The report acknowledges a response rate of only 54% and notes that the requirement of parental consent may have created bias via the exclusion of some students whose parents either objected to a survey on sexual health for religious or cultural reasons or had limited English literacy skills.

Given that (Hillier, Matthews and Dempsey, 1997) and (Rossiter et al., 2003) reported on same-sex attraction among homeless youth, results from these studies clearly cannot be generalised to the wider population; although it appears that this is what Lynne Hillier attempts to do in her presentation. The presentation claims that both of these studies reported a figure of 14%. It is unknown what survey method was used in these two studies, although a figure of 14% can be calculated when respondents who indicated that they were undecided about their sexuality are included as same-sex attracted.

It appears that the figure of 10% used later in the “Too hard basket” presentation was arrived at by taking an average of the findings of these so-called “baseline” studies. This method of exaggerating and then averaging same-sex attraction figures from biased, unrepresentative groups is described in a La Trobe University interview<sup>111</sup>:

*“Lynne Hillier: .... And we asked that in a rural study of 1400 young people. We asked it of homeless young people and then it was asked in and is always asked in secondary schools and sexual health studies, which go right through Australia in every state. And so, what we found in that is that we have around about 10 percent who are not attracted to the opposite sex.*

*“Interviewer: Is that even across the board, is it? In all those groups?”*

*“Lynne Hillier: It’s young women, young men. There are no gender differences there and it’s about 1 in 10. It’s an average and it pretty well covers it. So it’s a lot of young people.”*

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108 Smith A, Agius P, Dyson S, Mitchell A, Pitts M 2003, “Secondary students and sexual health 2002”, Monograph Series No.47, Melbourne, Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health & Society, La Trobe University.

109 Hillier, L., Matthews, L., Dempsey, D., “A low priority in a hierarchy of needs: A profile of the sexual health of young homeless people in Australia”, Report from the Sexuality, Homelessness and Young People Project (Part One), 1997, La Trobe University, Centre for the Study of Sexually Transmissible Diseases.

110 Rossiter, B., “Living well?: Homeless young people in Melbourne”, 2003, Melbourne, Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, La Trobe University.

111 La Trobe University website, <http://www.latrobe.edu.au/marketing/assets/podcasts/2011/110415-lynn-hillier.mp3> accessed 29/12/2015.

The studies in question certainly did not find that 10% of respondents were not attracted to the opposite sex, as claimed by Hillier. Yet the glib assertion that a 10% average “pretty well covers it” is used to establish the 10% figures.

#### 4.1.2.4 The 10% figure in Anthony Smith’s research and Kinsey’s 10% myth

Anthony Smith was a founding staff member of ARCSHS in 1993 and the lead a number of the centre’s large research programs. The rate of same-sex attraction among young Australians is quoted as 10% in a number of Smith’s publications. In each of these cases the claim is the result of exaggeration, or misquotation or false referencing.

Ironically, Smith had contributed an article to *Arena Magazine* in 1993 arguing that the gay movement should have abandoned the exaggerated figure of 10%<sup>112</sup>:

“Clearly, the gay movement should have given up the 10 per cent figure years ago.”

Smith outlined how the highly flawed research of Alfred Kinsey [who oversaw paedophilic experiments on children] gave rise to the myth of 10% which he states “...has been indelibly etched into the rhetoric of the post-gay-liberation generations of gay men and lesbians” and emphasised his belief that it is more important that the gay lobby harness “votes and money” rather than being focused on promoting an exaggerated figure for the prevalence of homosexuality. Despite his early rejection of the 10% are gay claim, Smith later came to see some utility in promoting the 10% figure in relation to the ARCSHS efforts to influence education policy.

(Smith and Rissel, 2003)<sup>113</sup> was an ARCSHS study of sexuality in Australians aged 16–59. In the introduction it is stated:

“In a study of school-age adolescents, approximately 10% reported some same-sex attraction, but the relationship between attraction and experience and identity was not assessed.”

The reference they provide for this statement is another article for which Smith was the lead author (Smith, 1999)<sup>114</sup>. (Smith, 1999) was a cross-section survey of 3387 public-school students in years 10 and 12. The results of this study in no way supports the 10% figure. The results in this paper clearly state:

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112 Anthony Smith, “The missing 9%”, *Arena Magazine*, August-September 1993, pp.7-8.

113 Smith, A., Rissel, C. E. et al. “Sex in Australia: Sexual identity, sexual attraction and sexual experience among a representative sample of adults”, 2003, *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health* (Impact Factor: 1.98), 2003, Feb, 27(2), pp.138-45. DOI: 10.1111/j.1467-842X.2003.tb00801.x

114 Smith AM, Lindsay J, Rosenthal D.A., “Same-sex attraction, drug injection and binge drinking among Australian adolescents”, *Aust NZ J Public Health*, 1999 Dec, 23(6), pp.643-6.

“Approximately 6% of respondents reported being currently attracted to members of their own sex.”

and

“Of the total sample, 6.3% indicated that were attracted to the same sex.”

However, in the introduction to the 1999 paper, Smith writes that previous studies involving “non-random samples of high schools” have “suggested” that “about” 10% of Australian adolescents between 14 and 18 years are either attracted to their own sex or “unsure” of their sexual attraction. The extensive qualifications about the accuracy of the data is telling. The references he provides are yet more publications by La Trobe authors: (Smith and Rosenthal, 1997)<sup>115</sup> and (Hillier, 1997)<sup>116</sup>.

In (Smith, 1997) the data show clearly that 6.7% (40 out of 597) of respondents said they experienced same-sex attraction. A figure close to 10% can be gained from this survey by grouping students who indicated that they were “not sure” of their sexual attractions with those who experienced SSA. As a key result Smith does somewhat misleadingly state that 90.2% indicated that they were attracted only to the opposite sex, giving the impression that the remainder were SSA, when in fact 4.2% (25 out of 597) indicated that they were unsure.

(Hillier, 1997) refers to the same study as (Hillier, 1996), which was discussed above. This was a Commonwealth-funded survey of 1168 school students in rural towns with the purported intention of researching sexual health. As mentioned above, rather than 10%, this study actually reported that 5.1% of respondents experienced same-sex attraction. In (Hillier, 1997) the author misleadingly attempts to generalise the (exaggerated) result of this small non-random sample to a wider population:

“The most important contribution of this study was that it established the presence of 11 per cent of this population of rural students who were not unequivocally heterosexual. Future sexual health research and health promotion should bear in mind this group and look to ways to establish the type and extent of their sexual health needs and to ensure that they are catered for adequately.” (Hillier, 1997)

It is significant that (Smith, 1999) references a further two studies which, although including adults, were somewhat different to La Trobe studies in terms of the level of detail of the data collected and

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115 Smith, A. M. A., & Rosenthal, D. A. (1997). “Aspects of the social wellbeing of non-heterosexual youth”. In: Richters, J., Duffin, R. et al., “Health in difference: Proceedings of the First National Lesbian, Gay, Transgender and Bisexual Health Conference, Sydney 3-5 October 1996, Sydney”, Australian Centre for Lesbian and Gay Research, 1997, pp.16-4.

116 Lynne Hillier, “Lesbian, gay, bisexual, unsure: The rural eleven percent”. In: Richters, J., Duffin, R. et al., “Health in difference: Proceedings of the First National Lesbian, Gay, Transgender and Bisexual Health Conference, Sydney 3-5 October 1996, Sydney”, Australian Centre for Lesbian and Gay Research, 1997; pp.90-94.



in that they were based on relatively large and carefully designed population based surveys. (Laumann, 1994)<sup>117</sup> and (Johnson, 1994)<sup>118</sup> presented results from US and UK studies respectively.

(Laumann, 1994) was based on the National Health and Social Life Survey, which was conducted on a large (n=3159) random sample of the adult population of the United States. Participants were asked: "In general are you sexually attracted only to men, mostly men, both men and women, mostly women, only women?" 6.2% of men and 4.4% of women indicated that they experienced at least some same-sex attraction. (Table 8.2, p.305).

It is notable that Smith references (Laumann 1994) as this publication devotes a whole section to the 10% myth which can be traced back to the infamous US researcher, Alfred Kinsey, whose horrendous experiments involving pedophilia and are well documented<sup>119</sup>. In Section 8.2, "The Myth of 10 Percent and the Kinsey Research" (pp.287-290), Laumann states:

"It is beyond the scope of this chapter to explain why so many people, both the lay public and professional researchers, came to believe in a 10 per cent figure so firmly, but it is worth discussing its probable origin."

The 10% figure was not originally a figure of the prevalence of same-sex attraction. Kinsey 1948<sup>120</sup> in fact reported that 10% of white males were "more or less exclusively homosexual" for at least three years between the ages of 16 and 55.

Although, Kinsey had recorded a number of statistics related to homosexuality, Laumann suggests that the 10% figure was chosen for marketing purposes:

"The choice of 10% as the single estimate to take from this list [Kinsey et al. 1948] represents an interesting compromise. Its attraction seems to reside in the fact that it is a simple round number and neither 'too small' nor 'too large'."

Laumann goes on to explain that Kinsey's high figures for homosexuality were the result of poor methodology:

"Kinsey's figures are much higher than those found in all recent population surveys, including ours. ...

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117 Laumann, Edward O., Gagnon, John H., Michael, Robert T., Michaels, Stuart, "The social organization of sexuality: Sexual practices in the United States", 1994, xxxii, 718pp.

118 Johnson, A.M., Wadsworth, J., Wellings, K. & Field, J. (1994) *Sexual Attitudes & Lifestyles*, Oxford, Blackwell Scientific Publications.

119 Reisman, J. A., *Kinsey, Sex and Fraud: The Indoctrination of a People*, 1990, Lochinvar-Huntington House Publishers, Lafayette, Louisiana.

120 Alfred C. Kinsey, Wardell R. Pomeroy, Clyde E. Martin, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*, Philadelphia, W.B. Saunders, 1948, pp.610-666.

“Kinsey’s respondents were all purposefully recruited rather than sampled with known probabilities of inclusion. ...

“Kinsey also purposefully recruited subjects for his research from homosexual friendship and acquaintance networks in big cities.”

(Smith, 1999) also referenced (Johnson, 1994), which reported on the British National Survey of Sexual Attitudes and Lifestyles. Using a base of 18,760 respondents, Johnson reported that 5.5% of men and 4.5% of women indicated any homosexual attraction (p.187). Johnson also reported that in the age group 16–24 the rate of experience of any homosexual attraction was 6.6% and 5.1% for men and women respectively.

#### **4.1.2.5 Reported Same Sex Attraction During Adolescence is Often Temporary and Unreliable**

Attractions reported during adolescence are often temporary and have little bearing on a person’s sexual orientation even a few years later. It was observed that over 70% of adolescents who had previously identified themselves as same-sex attracted in the US National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health<sup>121</sup> subsequently identified as exclusively heterosexual in young adulthood. Similarly, ARCSHS studies have reported a drastically lower figure than 10% for the proportion of adults who identify as homosexual or bisexual. For example, (Smith and Rissel et al., 2003)<sup>122</sup> was an ARCSHS study of sexuality in Australians aged 16–59. The study reported that among men 1.6% and 0.9% of respondents identified as gay and bisexual respectively, while among women 0.8% and 1.4% identified as homosexual and bisexual respectively.

Furthermore, study of sexual orientation among adolescents is susceptible to collection of false data as a result of mischievous participants. The National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health mentioned above was a large study with a sample size of 15,701 young adults. Further analysis of the results pertaining to sexual orientation were presented in a 2014 paper entitled “The dubious assessment of gay, lesbian, and bisexual adolescents of add health”<sup>123</sup> in which the authors concluded that the often temporary nature of the reported same-sex attraction was not likely to be the result of “gay adolescents going into the closet during their young adult years” but rather it was likely to be at least partly due to “ ‘mischievous’ adolescents who played a ‘jokester’ role by reporting same sex attraction when none was present”.

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121 <http://www.cpc.unc.edu/projects/addhealth> accessed 22/12/2015.

122 Smith, A., Rissel, C. E. et al., “Sex in Australia: Sexual identity, sexual attraction and sexual experience among a representative sample of adults”, 2003, *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health* (Impact Factor: 1.98). Feb 2003, 27(2), pp.138-45. DOI: 10.1111/j.1467-842X.2003.tb00801.x

123 Savin-Williams R.C., Jotner, K., “The dubious assessment of gay, lesbian, and bisexual adolescents of add health”, *Archives of Sexual Behaviour*, Volume 43, Issue 3, pp 413-422.

Perhaps it should be expected that sex research among adolescents is bound to attract some untruthful, exaggerated and mischievous responses. At the time they were promoting the 10% figure for same-sex attraction ARCSHS researchers were almost certainly aware of the now infamous sex research conducted by Margaret Mead. Mead had set about finding evidence to support her preconceived conclusion that adolescent Samoan girls were highly sexually active. She found two young Samoan women who provided her with just the stories of promiscuity that she was looking for. Mead proceeded to publish her 1928 study<sup>124</sup> exposing the supposed sexual behaviour of Samoan youth. However, it was later discovered that the two girls in true Samoan humour had played a joke on Mead<sup>125</sup> and had no doubt found great satisfaction in tricking the sophisticated academic who had come to study the “primitive youth”.

The practice in surveys of using the existence of some same-sex attraction as a proxy for sexual orientation among adolescents is flawed for a number of reasons:

1. Survey results, including many of those mentioned above, tend to be inflated because the questionnaires used are generally designed such that respondents who have experienced even the briefest homosexual attraction are grouped with those who are exclusively homosexual.
2. Results are susceptible to abuse through the aggregation of responses from young participants who are unsure of their attractions with those who are same-sex attracted.
3. Attractions during adolescence are often temporary and have little bearing on a person’s sexual orientation in adulthood.
4. Anonymous surveys on the topic of sex are bound to attract some exaggerated or untruthful responses from mischievous adolescents.

Yet on the basis of the 10% figure, the SSCA program has been rolled out in many Australian schools with the support of the Australian Education Union.

#### 4.1.2.6 Current prevalence estimates for sexual orientation

While ARCSHS publications have frequently quoted the rate of same-sex attraction among young Australians as 10%, this figure is in stark contrast to Australian Bureau of Statistics estimates for sexual orientation. The General Social Survey 2014<sup>126</sup> conducted by the ABS reported on data collected from the residents of 12,932 dwellings. The authors reported that 3.0% of the Australian population aged 18 or older identified as gay, lesbian, bisexual or “other”.

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124 Margaret Mead, *Coming of Age in Samoa: A Psychological Study of Primitive Youth for Western Civilisation*, 1928, New York, W. Morrow and Company.

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[http://www.members.optusnet.com.au/pcook62/pcook62/Margaret\\_Mead\\_Samoa\\_and\\_the\\_sexual\\_revolution.html](http://www.members.optusnet.com.au/pcook62/pcook62/Margaret_Mead_Samoa_and_the_sexual_revolution.html), accessed 22/1/2016.

126 <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4159.0Main+Features12014?OpenDocument>, accessed 22/1/2016.

Similarly, the United States 2013 National Health Interview Survey was conducted on a representative sample of the US adult population (n=34,557). 1.6% of respondents identified as gay or lesbian and 0.7% identified as bisexual, while 1.1% of respondents either did not provide an answer, identified as “something else” or stated “I don’t know”.<sup>127</sup>

## 4.2 Homophobic bullying and the *Writing Themselves In* reports

Bullying is a serious problem in Australian schools and LGBT youth are among a number of groups which are at an increased risk of being bullied. The problem of bullying is addressed later in this report. In order to justify the funding and implementation of a sexuality-based anti-bullying campaign, the La Trobe University researchers needed to demonstrate not only that there was a significant same-sex attracted population in schools but also that this group were the victims of widespread bullying. The marketing of Safe Schools Coalition Victoria and subsequently Safe Schools Coalition Australia relied heavily on the ARCSHS *Writing Themselves In* studies. These studies are quoted in SSCA official resources<sup>128 129</sup>, Victorian Government publications<sup>130 131 132 133</sup> and a Federal Parliamentary Speech<sup>134</sup> in support of SSCA.

These reports presented the results of surveys conducted with youth who were recruited through lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) organisations and the gay press, and are as likely to be biased towards the matter as those who are gay activists. This contrasts with, say, interviewing students randomly in schools.

Although bullying is a serious problem, the definition of what constitutes homophobic “discrimination” in the *Writing Themselves In* reports tends to be particularly vague. Most importantly the samples for the *Writing Themselves In* reports were clearly drawn from a population

127 Ward, W. B., et al., “Sexual orientation and health among US adults: National Health Interview Survey, 2013”, National Health Statistics Reports, Number 77, July 15, 2014, <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nhsr/nhsr077.pdf> accessed 22/1/2016.

128 *Safe Schools Do Better* (p.6), Safe Schools Coalition Australia official resource, 2013, <http://www.safeschoolscoalition.org.au/safe-schools-do-better>, accessed 22/12/2015.

129 *Stand Out*, Safe Schools Coalition Australia official resource, p.8, <http://www.safeschoolscoalition.org.au/stand-out>, accessed 22/12/2015.

130 “Safe schools are effective schools: A resource for developing safe and supportive school environments”, 2006, Victorian Department of Education and Training, p.14.

131 Liz Alexander, “Creating safe schools: The role of partnerships between parents and schools in supporting sexual and gender diversity, 2003, produced by the SSAFE (Same-Sex Attracted Friendly Environments) in Schools Project, Family Planning Victoria; funded by the Victorian Premier’s Drug Prevention Council and VicHealth.

132 “What’s the difference? Health issues of major concern to gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex (GLBTI) Victorians”, 2002, Ministerial Advisory Committee on Gay and Lesbian Health, published by the Victorian Government Department of Human Services.

133 “Supporting sexual diversity in schools”, 2008, Student Wellbeing & Health Support Division Office for Government School Education Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.

134 Kate Ellis, MP, Wednesday, December 3, 2014, House of Representatives, Parliament of Australia.

that differed drastically to the ARCSHS school-based studies that were used to estimate the prevalence of same-sex attraction.

#### 4.2.1 *The Writing Themselves In reports*

Participants in the *WTI* studies represented a specific subset of same-sex attracted young people with approximately 90% having adopted a label such as gay, lesbian, bisexual, queer or pansexual (*WTI3*, pp.27-28). Participants were recruited through gay activist networks and organisations, as well as the gay press and “GLBTI contacts”:

“Banner advertisements were placed in gay press around the country – *MCV*, circulated in Victoria and Tasmania, *Blaze* in South Australia and the *Sydney Star Observer*. Other forms of advertising included feature articles written on the project by *Lesbians On the Loose* in Sydney and *Queer Territory* in Darwin.” (*WTIA*, p.8)

“Online postings were included on gay activist Rodney Croome’s weblog” (*WTIA*, p.9)

Given the recruitment strategy, it is not surprising that the participants tended to be activists. In fact, one of the stated aims of *Writing Themselves in Again* was to document homosexual activism among young people (p.3).

In a 2011 interview<sup>135</sup> Lynne Hillier commented that participants in *WTIA* (which was used extensively to promote SSICA) were more likely to be involved in homosexual activism than participants in the original report:

“They’re much more likely to be activists.”

Comments of the participants themselves also demonstrate their activism:

“In 2003 i was a youth speaker at the [names country town] SSAY conference held here. and i am also trying to be involved in queer affairs on [university] campus.” (*WTIA*, p.15)

“This year, I really got my shit together. I got elected to both the Student Council at my campus, and the state branch of NUS. (As Sexuality Officer). Running the queer collective and presenting reports, etc, at meetings was a very rewarding experience for me. Although my self-confidence wasn’t that bad before it is a hell of a lot better now. Maybe I just like the sound of my own voice, but I’ve developed a taste for public speaking) I took a queer

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135 Online interview recorded March 2011 at The Second Asia Pacific Out games Human Rights Conference, [http://www.pridenz.com/apog\\_lynne\\_hillier.html](http://www.pridenz.com/apog_lynne_hillier.html), accessed 21/12/2015

theory unit at uni, and that got me interested in postmodernism. It's been a useful tool to analyse and help me deal with my life." (*WTIA*, p.82)

*Writing Themselves In Again* did provide a disclaimer regarding the bias in the study that was completely disregarded by the authors themselves when they subsequently used the report for lobbying purposes:

"As with the original survey, the sample generated is not random, and no claim is made that results can be generalised to the broader population of young people." (*WTIA*, p.7)

It is also of concern that the authors may have been prejudiced by their awareness that, in order to gain government support and funding, it was necessary to demonstrate that homophobic bullying was a health issue:

"There is the added problem that health funding bodies want to address health problems." (*WTIA*, p.2)

#### **4.2.2 The definition of "abuse" in the *Writing Themselves In* reports is not specified**

In an earlier publication Lynne Hillier described how people involved with gay organisations differ from other same-sex attracted people:

"People who attend specialist venues are far more likely to identify as gay or lesbian, and will have tapped into gay and lesbian-positive discourses around sexuality." (Hillier, 1997)

Perhaps it should be added that these people may also be more likely to identify any "heteronormative" language and behaviour as offensive bullying. *WTIA* seems to suggest this is the case:

"In 2004 same-sex attracted young people are more likely to be part of networks and to be involved in discussion about homophobia and this may mean their awareness of discrimination is higher." (*WTIA*, p.36)

The *WTIA* author goes on to say that the rate of reporting of discrimination is higher than in the first study partly because of participants' "sharper recognition of unfair treatment" and:

"In their descriptions of the unfair treatment they received, young people showed more sophistication in their understanding of discrimination than in 1998, picking up on subtle differences in behaviour in those around them." (*WTIA*, p.36)

Some of the descriptions of “discrimination” that the participants provide is highly nonspecific in nature:

“Being misunderstood, unable to be public with my partner, the usual shit that goes with being gay. I think it’s harder to maintain a relationship with someone of the same sex due to environmental pressure forced on us by people around us.” (*WTIA*, p.36)

In addition to being asked about their experience of physical or verbal abuse, respondents were asked if they had experienced “other types of homophobia” and hence respondents were effectively free to define homophobic abuse themselves (some purely subjective suggestions were offered such as being “left out” or humiliated) (*WTI3*, p.116).

#### **4.2.3 Different populations: bullying data and prevalence of same-sex attraction**

SSCA promotional materials frequently quote the 10% figure for the prevalence of same-sex attraction alongside the high rates of experience of homophobic discrimination reported in *WTI* reports. This creates the impression that the stated rate of discrimination applies to the school students. This frequently used strategy is deliberate and deceptive not only because both statistics are biased and lack validity, as described above, but also because the populations to which the two statistics refer are vastly different.

The *WTI* study populations tended to be people who identified as homosexual and were involved in gay activism. This cannot be said of the “10%” subgroup in the school-based surveys who indicated that they experienced same-sex attraction (or that they were unsure of their attraction).

### **4.3 Bullying is a serious and widespread problem in Australian schools**

The Australian Government's Safe Schools Hub<sup>136</sup> defines bullying in the following terms:

“Bullying is an ongoing misuse of power in relationships through repeated verbal, physical and/or social behaviour that causes physical and/or psychological harm. It can involve an individual or a group misusing their power over one or more persons. Bullying can happen in person or online, and it can be obvious (overt) or hidden (covert).”<sup>137</sup>

Bullying is a widespread problem in Australian schools with approximately one in four Year 4 to Year 9 Australian students (27%) report being bullied every few weeks or more often during the last

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136 <http://www.safeschoolshub.edu.au/>, accessed 29/1/2016.

137 <http://www.safeschoolshub.edu.au/resources-and-help/Glossary#Bullying>, accessed 29/1/2016.

term at school.<sup>138</sup> The most common types of bullying are verbal and social followed by physical bullying, while cyberbullying happens the least frequently.<sup>139</sup> The impacts of bullying can be severe and include depression, anxiety, health complaints and decreased academic achievement<sup>140</sup>. Furthermore, the effects of bullying can be long lasting<sup>141</sup>.

The US Government's Stop Bullying initiative<sup>142</sup> states that particular groups including LGBT youth as well as youth with disabilities, and socially isolated youth tend to have an increased risk of being bullied. In addition, the Stop Bullying website states that youth are at increased risk of being bullied if they:

- "Are perceived as different from their peers, such as being overweight or underweight, wearing glasses or different clothing, being new to a school, or being unable to afford what kids consider 'cool'
- "Are perceived as weak or unable to defend themselves
- "Are depressed, anxious, or have low self-esteem
- "Are less popular than others and have few friends
- "Do not get along well with others, seen as annoying or provoking, or antagonise others for attention"

– (stopbullying.gov website)

#### 4.3.1 Prevention of bullying

The aim of anti-bullying programs should be to prevent all forms of bullying, regardless of who are the targets/victims. Respect for all people should be aim of any anti-bullying program, not the singling out of any one group for protection.

The National Safe Schools Framework<sup>143</sup> lays out a multifaceted approach for creating school environments which are safe and supportive for all students. The framework is comprises nine key elements necessary for creating safe schools:

1. Leadership commitment to a safe school
2. A supportive and connected school culture
3. Policies and procedures
4. Professional learning

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138 Cross, D., Shaw, T., Hearn, L., Epstein, M., Monks, H., Lester, L., & Thomas, L. 2009. "Australian covert bullying prevalence study (ACBPS)", Child Health Promotion Research Centre, Edith Cowan University, Perth.

139 <http://www.stopbullying.gov/news/media/facts/#listing>, accessed 29/1/2016.

140 <http://www.stopbullying.gov/at-risk/effects/>, accessed 29/1/2016.

141 <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/health/children/10772302/Bullying-at-school-affects-health-40-years-later.html>, accessed 29/1/2016.

142 <http://www.stopbullying.gov/at-risk/factors/index.html>, accessed 29/1/2016.

143 <https://www.education.gov.au/national-safe-schools-framework-0>, accessed 29/1/2016.



5. Positive behaviour management
6. Engagement, skill development and safe school curriculum
7. A focus on student wellbeing and student ownership
8. Early intervention and targeted support
9. Partnerships with families and community

The Safe Schools Hub<sup>144</sup> is an extensive online resource funded by the Australian Government Department of Education and Training which provides information and resources for the implementation of the National Safe Schools Framework. Resources are provided for parents, students, schools and teachers.

“Bullying. No Way!” is an initiative managed by the Safe and Supportive School Communities (SSSC) Working Group. The SSSC includes education representatives from the Commonwealth and all states and territories, as well as national Catholic and independent schooling representatives. The “Bullying. No Way!” website outlines a number of strategies that research has indicated are likely to be the most effective in preventing and reducing bullying:

- A universal whole-school approach of long duration that takes a multi-faceted approach rather than focusing on one single component
- An increased awareness of bullying in the school community through assemblies, focus days and student-owned plans and activities
- A whole-school detailed policy that addresses bullying
- Effective classroom management and classroom rules
- The promotion of a positive school environment that provides safety, security and support for students and promotes positive relationships and student wellbeing
- Effective methods of behaviour management that are consistently used, are non-hostile and non-punitive
- Encouragement and skill development for all students (and especially bystanders) to respond negatively to bullying behaviour and support students who are bullied

Similarly, “Bullying. No Way!” states that punitive or zero-tolerance strategies have been shown through research to be far less effective in reducing bullying.<sup>145</sup> “Bullying. No Way!” provides links to further resources<sup>146</sup> to assist in the development of school strategies and policies for dealing with bullying. For example, “Working together: A toolkit for effective school-based action against bullying”<sup>147</sup> outlines a multifaceted whole-school approach for preventing and responding to bullying.

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144 <http://www.safeschoolshub.edu.au/>, accessed 29/1/2016.

145 <http://www.bullyingnoway.gov.au/teachers/school-strategies/safe-support.html>, accessed 29/1/2016.

146 <http://www.bullyingnoway.gov.au/teachers/school-strategies/resources.html>, accessed 29/1/2016.

147 “Working together: A toolkit for effective school-based action against bullying”, 2010, Queensland Schools Alliance Against Violence.

(Note: The inclusion of Safe Schools Coalition Australia within the website of the National Safe Schools Framework would appear contradictory given the erroneous basis and inappropriate content of the SSCA program as well as its singular focus on LGBT bullying.)

#### 4.3.2 Bullying and suicide

In the document, “The relationship between bullying and suicide: What we know and what it means for schools”<sup>148</sup>, the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that schools adopt a number of strategies to prevent bullying-associated suicide:

- Help students to feel connected to the school community through positive relationships with teachers and extracurricular interests and involvement
- Teach youth life/coping skills to build resilience and increase their social intelligence and empathy
- Train personnel about vulnerable populations and appropriate ways to intervene in bullying situations. Understand that acknowledging risk factors is not the same as victim blaming
- Empower youth by providing concrete, positive, and proactive ways they can influence the social norms of their peer group so that bullying is seen as an uncool behaviour. Encourage more work on bystander approaches to violence prevention in general

The CDC document states that it is important to acknowledge the relationship between bullying and suicide in order to raise awareness both of the harm of bullying and of the groups that are at particular risk of being bullied, including LGBT youth, as well as youth with disabilities and youth with learning differences. However, it also states that suicide is generally the result of a number of factors and the discussion of bullying as being a single, direct cause of suicide is *not* (my emphasis) helpful and is potentially harmful because this may:

1. Perpetuate the false notion that suicide is a natural response to being bullied, which has the dangerous potential to normalise the response and thus create copycat behaviour among youth
2. Encourage sensationalised reporting and contradicts the “Recommendations for reporting on suicide” (<http://reportingonsuicide.org>) potentially encouraging copycat behaviour that could lead to “suicide contagion”
3. Focus the response on blame and punishment, which misdirects the attention from getting the needed support and treatment to those who are bullied as well as those who bully others

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148 “The relationship between bullying and suicide: What we know and what it means for schools, United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, <http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/bullying-suicide-translation-final-a.pdf>, accessed 1/2/2016.

4. Take attention away from other important risk factors for suicidal behaviour that need to be dealt with (e.g. substance abuse, mental illnesses, problems coping with disease/disability, family dysfunction, etc.)

– (United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)

## 4.4 Suicide and self-harm evidence has been misrepresented to justify SSCA

One of the most powerful elements of the SSCA marketing campaign has been the consistent claim that the program is necessary to combat the homophobic environment in schools, which is represented as being the cause of suicide and self-harm among same-sex attracted youth.

The La Trobe University researchers have promoted this narrative widely through publications such as the *WTI* reports as well as SSCA official resources<sup>149150</sup> and government documents<sup>151152</sup>. The official SSCA guide for student activism asserts:

“We know that there can also be some pretty serious health outcomes for young people who are affected by homophobia – things like unwanted pregnancy, being more likely to catch a sexually transmissible infection, taking drugs, self-harming and even suicide.” (*Stand Out*, p.8)

The booklet *Creating Safe Schools*, which was released by Family Planning Victoria in 2003 with support from the ARCSHS La Trobe, claims:

“Being same-sex attracted does not increase a young person’s risk for suicide or risk-taking behaviour. It is the broader social context, and the factors associated with being same-sex attracted such as rejection, isolation and victimisation that do.” (*Creating Safe Schools*, p.5)

The Victorian Government’s Health and Sexual Diversity Action Plan (2003) was produced largely on advice from the Ministerial Advisory Committee on Gay and Lesbian Health (MACGLH) on which Anne Mitchell of ARCSHS at La Trobe University was the Deputy Chair. The report asserts:

“Systematic and ongoing discrimination against sexual and gender minorities results in primary health issues and patterns of illness specific to GLBTI people.” (“Health and sexual diversity”, 2003, p.12)

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149 *Safe Schools Do Better*, p.6, Safe Schools Coalition Australia official resource, 2013, <http://www.safeschoolscoalition.org.au/safe-schools-do-better>, accessed 22/12/2015.

150 *Stand Out*, p.8, Safe Schools Coalition Australia official resource, <http://www.safeschoolscoalition.org.au/stand-out>, accessed 22/12/2015.

151 “Health and sexual diversity: A health and wellbeing action plan for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex (GLBTI) Victorians”, 2003, Victorian Government Department of Human Services, Melbourne, Victoria.

152 “Supporting sexual diversity in schools”, p.6, 2008, Student Wellbeing & Health Support Division Office for Government School Education Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.

The behavioural issues include depression, suicide, drug and alcohol use, HIV, STIs and adolescent pregnancy. The authors assert that increased drug use and sexual activity represent a coping mechanism used by same-sex attracted youth to deal with the pressures of being gay (pp.17-18). The report illustrates a similar narrative for transgender youth.

It is telling that in a speech at the launch of Safe Schools Coalition NSW, Human Rights Commissioner Tim Wilson emphasised what SSCA largely ignores: that much of the psychological pressure experienced by same-sex attracted youth is not the result of bullying from others:

“Yes, there are problems of harassment and bullying from their peers. But there is something unique about the issues that LGBTI people experience. What’s perhaps more prevalent with LGBTI people is not just that the bullying comes from others, it also comes from within.”<sup>153</sup>

SSCA materials give the impression that the cause the sole cause of these harmful/destructive behaviours is homophobia and discrimination in schools. This ignores mainstream research and has the potential to obscure the underlying causes of self-harm and suicide with serious consequences:

1. Same-sex attracted youth are likely to have underlying issues that will not be dealt with.
2. **The SSCA program actively promotes behaviours that are known to be risk factors for self-injurious behaviour.**

#### **4.4.1 Has the relationship between early sexual debut and self-harm been ignored?**

Given that the SSCA program may encourage early sexual activity among students, the question is raised as to whether SSCA has adequately considered the possible psychological consequences for young people who engage in this behaviour.

There is overwhelming evidence from the ARCSHS and elsewhere of the link between early sexual debut and same-sex attraction<sup>154155</sup> (*WTI* reports also). The strong link between early sexual debut and self-harm and suicide-related behaviour (discussed below) is well documented in mainstream research and yet it is noticeably absent in ARCSHS publications and is certainly not mentioned in SSCA materials.

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153 Tim Wilson, Speech at the launch of Safe Schools Coalition NSW, <https://www.humanrights.gov.au/news/speeches/launch-safe-schools-coalition-nsw>, accessed 23/1/2016.

154 Tornello S.L., Riskind R.G., Patterson C.J., “Sexual orientation and sexual and reproductive health among adolescent young women in the United States”, *J Adolesc Health*. 2014 Feb, 54(2), pp.160-68.

155 van Griensven F. et al., “The prevalence of bisexual and homosexual orientation and related health risks among adolescents in northern Thailand”, *Arch Sex Behav*. 2004 Apr, 33(2), pp.137-47.

It is vital that bullying in schools be dealt with because youth who experience bullying are at an increased risk of suicide-related behaviour. Furthermore, certain groups such as youth with disabilities, learning differences, sexual/gender identity differences or cultural differences are often most vulnerable to being bullied<sup>156</sup>. Notwithstanding this, the following research suggests that young people who are sexually active from an early age are also at increased risk of suicide-related behaviour. Furthermore, same-sex sexual behaviour among adolescents may itself be a risk factor for suicide and this also warrants further investigation as to whether SSCA has taken into account this risk in its school-based program.

A longitudinal Norwegian study<sup>157</sup> of 2924 adolescents found that early sexual debut was a risk factor for suicide attempt. The same study investigated homosexual attraction, homosexual identity, and same-sex sexual behaviour as potential risk factors for suicide attempt and determined that, of the three, only same-sex sexual behaviour was significantly predictive and the increased odds could not be attributed to gay students' greater exposure to other risk factors for suicide attempt.

Similarly, a 2008 study<sup>158</sup> found that both same-sex sexual experiences and early age at first intercourse were correlated with self-harm. Even when socioeconomic factors are taken into account, the rate of attempted suicide has been shown to be drastically higher among sexually active adolescents than among adolescents who are not sexually active<sup>159</sup>. In addition to direct self-harm, early sexual debut has been linked with high-risk sexual and general health behaviours<sup>160</sup> as well as depression and poor psychological health<sup>161</sup>. The frequency of direct self-injurious behaviours has also been linked to risky sexual behaviours.<sup>162</sup>

ARCSHS studies including the *Writing Themselves In* reports frequently describe high rates of risk-taking behaviour such as drug use (sometimes with the intention of suicide) among same-sex attracted young people although the authors generally attribute this behaviour to homophobia (*WTIA*, pp.58-60). Also, (Smith, 1999) reported that same-sex attracted young males were four times more likely to have injected drugs than other males; while same-sex attracted females were three times more likely to have injected.

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156 "The relationship between bullying and suicide: What we know and what it means for schools", United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, <http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/bullying-suicide-translation-final-a.pdf>, accessed 1/2/2016.

157 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.

158 Sansone, R.A., Wiederman, M.W., Barnes, J. "Diverse sexual experiences and self-harm among women in an internal medicine setting", *Psychiatry*, September 2008.

159 Rector, R. Johnson, J.A., Noyes L.R., "Sexually active teenagers are more likely to be depressed and to attempt suicide", 2003, <http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2003/06/sexually-active-teenagers-are-more-likely-to-be-depressed>, accessed 22/12/2015.

160 Kastbom, A.A., et al., "Sexual debut before the age of 14 leads to poorer psychosocial health and risky behaviour in later life", *ACTA Paediatrica*, Vol. 104, Jan 2015, 1, pp.91-100.

161 Lara, L.A., Abdo, C.H., "Age at initial sexual intercourse and health of adolescent girls", *J Pediatr Adolesc Gynecol.* 2015 Dec 1, p.ii: S1083-3188(15)00417-9.

162 Matthew K. Nock, Ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Suicide and Self-Injury*, Oxford University Press, 2014, pp.51-56.

The well-documented connection between adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), same-sex attraction and self-harm is also notably absent in SSCA material and rare in ARCSHS publications. Adverse childhood experiences include experiences such as verbal, sexual and physical abuse, violence, crime or mental illness present in the household. There is strong evidence that sexual minorities are disproportionately exposed to adverse childhood experiences.<sup>163 164 165</sup>

(Brown et al., 2015)<sup>166</sup> conducted a detailed statistical analysis of the relationship between adverse childhood experiences, sexual orientation, sex and early sexual debut. The study was based on a representative sample of the US adult population. The sample size was 31,724. Their results confirmed that sexual minorities were exposed to adverse childhood experiences more and also tended to have an early sexual debut. Furthermore, a causative link was suggested:

“Due to being exposed to ACEs [adverse childhood experiences], sexual minorities may also initiate sex earlier in an attempt to obtain more personal connections as adolescents.”  
(Brown et al., 2015)

*The Oxford Handbook of Suicide and Self-Injury*<sup>167</sup> provides evidence that children who witnessed or experienced violence were approximately six times more likely to engage in self-injurious behaviour and over twice as likely to have an early age of first sexual intercourse and to engage in other risky sexual and health behaviours. Other research<sup>168</sup> has also demonstrated that early sexual debut is associated with adverse childhood experiences.

Further investigation is required to establish whether the SSCA program takes into account sufficiently the fact that there is substantial evidence of a link between adverse childhood experiences, same-sex attraction and self-harm.

It is concerning that the ARCSHS publications which form the basis for SSCA do not discuss these relationships while they do:

1. Promote the view that early sexual experiences are a positive part of childhood and should be encouraged

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163 Zietsch, B.P., Verweij K.J., Heath, A.C., Madden, P.A., Martin, N.G., Nelson, E.C., Lynskey, M.T., “Do shared etiological factors contribute to the relationship between sexual orientation and depression?”, *Psychol Med.* 2012 Mar, 42(3), pp.521-32.

164 McLaughlin, K.A., Hatzenbuehler, M.L., Xuan, Z., Conron, K.J., “Disproportionate exposure to early-life adversity and sexual orientation disparities in psychiatric morbidity”, *Child Abuse Negl.* 2012 Sep, 36(9), pp.645-55.

165 Andersen, J.P., Blosnich, J., “Disparities in adverse childhood experiences among sexual minority and heterosexual adults: Results from a multi-state probability-based sample”, *PLoS One.* 2013, 8(1), e54691.

166 Brown, M.J. et al., “Sex and sexual orientation disparities in adverse childhood experiences and early age at sexual debut in the United States: Results from a nationally representative sample”, *Child Abuse Negl.* 2015 Aug.; 46, pp.89-102. DOI: 10.1016/j.chiabu.2015.02.019.

167 Matthew K. Nock, Ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Suicide and Self-Injury*, Oxford University Press, 2014, pp.51-56.

168 Hillis, S.D. et al., “Adverse childhood experiences and sexual risk behaviors in women: A retrospective cohort study”, *Family Planning Perspectives*, Volume 33, Number 5, September/October 2001.

2. Regard self-injurious behaviour, both direct and indirect, among same-sex attracted young people as necessarily a result of a homophobic environment which needs to be reconstructed.

ARCSHS researchers conducted a review<sup>169</sup> of international and Australian literature focusing on suicide and sexuality. They concluded that the evidence did not in fact support the notion that sexual orientation in itself is a risk factor for suicidal behaviour. That is to say that the high rates of suicidal behaviour among people who identified as gay were explained by other factors. In spite of reviewing many carefully designed studies, the ARCSHS researchers effectively dismissed this research apparently because it did not align with their preconceived agenda:

“Mainstream researchers maintain there is inadequate evidence to substantiate an independent link between suicide risk and sexual orientation while worker advocates and researchers of sexuality issues assert that same-sex attracted young people are underrepresented in mainstream research, and cite more qualitative and anecdotal evidence of a connection.”

The ARCSHS authors went on to focus on homophobic discrimination and recommend the collection of data to address “negative attitudes towards homosexuality and its consequent prejudice and discrimination” (p.41). This offhand approach to suicide research is dangerous in that it diverts attention (and subsequently resources) from the primary causes of suicide in both same-sex attracted youth and other young people. It is noticeable that the authors only mention in passing (in an appendix) a number of other known risk factors for suicide, including “early sexual experience” and “multiple sexual experiences” as risk factors for suicidal behaviour (p.43).

The downplaying of these other known risk factors is all the more remarkable because a number of same-sex attracted young people in various SSCA materials and ARCSHS studies do describe adverse childhood experiences and a pattern of disturbingly early sexual experiences, some of which did clearly lead to serious psychological harm. A SSCA official resource provides evidence of (apparent) parental abuse:

“I’d always had frequent conflicts with my Mum. We never saw eye to eye and our personalities clashed. She often verbally abused me and made me feel worthless.” (*OMG im Queer*, p.12)

The *Writing Themselves In* reports provide evidence of sexual experience at a very young age:

“Simon’s description of his sexual pathway is a simplified one, but typical of a sexual trajectory of many of the young men. ‘I first knew I “liked boys” when I was in year 4 (aged 9 years), first touched a boy’s penis at age 11, first blew, and got a blow in year 8 aged 13, first had anal sex at 17.’ (Simon, 19 years)” (*WTIA*, p.30)

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<sup>169</sup> Dyson, S. et al., “Don’t ask, don’t tell. Hidden in the crowd: the need for documenting links between sexuality and suicidal behaviours among young people”, 2003, ARCSHS, La Trobe University.

“ ‘The first man I truly loved was 26 (I was 16 at the time). I met him online, and after about a year we met in real life. I thought I knew him well, but he used me, then one of my friends for sex and acted innocent afterwards. He was my first and will always have his mark on me. I have never spoken to that ‘friend’ again, and I got very unstable mentally for months afterwards. I had unprotected sex as a warped kind of punishment. Don’t ask me, I don’t really understand it myself, but I used sex as a way to punish myself, and cried during the event.’ He continues later: ‘I never thought I’d live to finish my VCE, and I really don’t know how I manage not to suicide. The only thing that really stops me is the pain I’d cause to the people around me, and the trauma I’d inflict on whoever would find my body.’ ” (WTIA, p.4).

4B. How old were you when you first had an experience  
Of ... (Please tick one age box for each type of experience.)

	Under 13	13	14	15	16	17	18+	Never
Deep kissing?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Touching a partner's genitals with your hand?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Being touched on your genitals by a partner's hand?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Giving oral sex?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Receiving oral sex?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Had penetrative sex (including girl with girl, boy with boy)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Figure 14. Question from survey form used to collect data for the *Writing Themselves In Again* study.

In regards to age at first sexual experience, it is telling that the *Writing Themselves In* reports do not report specifically on the rates of sexual activity at ages below 15, even though detailed data was collected on various sexual experiences in age categories of 14 and “under 13” (*Writing Themselves In Again*, p.90). Why was this area of research not reported? Was the relationship between age at first sexual experience and self-harm effectively ignored?



#### 4.4.2 Intimate partner violence

The relatively high rate of intimate-partner violence within homosexual relationships<sup>170</sup> is another factor impacting upon the psychological wellbeing of same sex-attracted people. Yet again this factor is all but ignored in SSCA materials, which focus instead almost solely on homophobia as the cause of psychological distress.

ARCSHS research<sup>171</sup> has in fact highlighted same-sex partner abuse with a 2006 ARCSHS study<sup>172</sup> reporting rates of lifetime experience of same-sex partner abuse of 27.9% and 40.7% for men and women respectively, and a rate of 61.8% for female-to-male transgender study participants. Other researchers<sup>173</sup> have also described a high level of partner abuse among lesbian and bisexual women. The gay press<sup>174</sup> has also raised the issue of intimate partner violence:

“A recent survey of LGBTI people in NSW found more than half have experienced abuse in their relationships. It also found nearly three-quarters experience emotional abuse from their partners. Moreover, the survey – *Call It What It Really Is* – found that experiences of abuse were most pronounced among transgender respondents. Another survey found up to 70 per cent of trans men have indicated some experience of DFV (Domestic and Family Violence).” (Gay News Network, Dec 2015)

## 5 Transgenderism

Another aspect of SSCA’s sexualisation of children and young people is that SSCA facilitates students accessing material on gender transition treatment and doing so without their parents’ knowledge (see Section 3.2, pages 12 to 16). Gender reassignment fails to treat underlying mental

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<sup>170</sup> Dank, M., Lachman, P., Zweig, J.M., Yahner, J., “Dating violence experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth”, *J Youth Adolesc.* 2014 May, 43(5), pp.846-57.

<sup>171</sup> Leonard, W., Mitchell, A., Patel, S., and Fox, C., “Coming forward: The underreporting of heterosexist violence and same-sex partner abuse in Victoria”, Monograph Series Number 69, 2008, Melbourne, The Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health & Society, La Trobe University, p.45.

<sup>172</sup> Pitts, M., Smith, A., Mitchell, A., Patel, S., “Private lives: A report on the health and wellbeing of GLBTI Australians”, 2006, Melbourne, The Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health & Society, La Trobe University.

<sup>173</sup> NISVS: An Overview of 2010 Findings on Victimization by Sexual Orientation, [http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/cdc\\_nisvs\\_victimization\\_final-a.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/cdc_nisvs_victimization_final-a.pdf), accessed 23/12/2015.

<sup>174</sup> Reg Domingo, Ron Hughes, “Suffering in silence: Domestic violence in the LGBTI community”, Dec 14, 2015, <http://gaynewsnetwork.com.au/feature/suffering-in-silence-domestic-violence-in-the-lgbti-community-19878.html>, accessed 5/1/2016.

health issues with studies finding that the suicide rate for individuals who have undergone sex reassignment is approximately 20 times higher than average<sup>175</sup>.

While the SSCA was established on the basis of preventing bullying of homosexual students, the program is being used to promote the most extreme view of absolute personal autonomy. Not only are children and adolescents asked to choose a label for their sexuality but also their gender. SSCA presents what is essentially irreversible body mutilation as a valid choice.

## 5.1 A psychological disorder

Until recently the condition was referred to as “gender identity disorder” (GID). However, it was renamed “gender dysphoria” in the fifth edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5)* published by the American Psychiatric Association. According to the publishers this change was largely for the purpose of protecting the feelings of patients by avoiding use of the word “disorder”<sup>176</sup>. Nevertheless, it is still present as a psychiatric diagnosis in the manual of disorders.

Paul McHugh, MD, was the University Distinguished Service Professor of Psychiatry at Johns Hopkins Medical School for forty years – twenty-six of which were also spent as Psychiatrist in Chief of Johns Hopkins Hospital, which is a world-renowned medical research institution. Johns Hopkins Hospital pioneered sex-change surgery during the 1970s but soon ceased the service upon finding no important benefit to the patients. In an article<sup>177</sup> published online at The Public Discourse, Professor McHugh states: “The idea that one’s sex is a feeling, not a fact, has permeated our culture and is leaving casualties in its wake. Gender dysphoria should be treated with psychotherapy, not surgery.”

McHugh outlines two primary categories of transgender patients: older men “who come to their disordered assumption through being sexually aroused by the image of themselves as women” (he suggests Bruce Jenner should have received psychotherapy and medication), and young boys and girls who “come *with* psychosocial issues – conflicts over the prospects, expectations, and roles that they sense are attached to their given sex – and presume that sex-reassignment will ease or resolve them.”

He believes that there is compelling evidence that gender dysphoria is a psychological matter in the same family of disorders as anorexia nervosa and body dysmorphic disorder and states:

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175 Dhejne, C., Lichtenstein, P., Boman, M., Johansson, A.L.V., Långström, N., Landén, M., “Long-term follow-up of transsexual persons undergoing sex-reassignment surgery”, Cohort Study in Sweden, 2011, PLoS ONE 6(2): e16885. DOI:10.1371/journal.pone.0016885

176 <http://www.dsm5.org/documents/gender%20dysphoria%20fact%20sheet.pdf>, accessed 14/1/2016.

177 “Transgenderism: A pathogenic meme”, June 10, 2015, published online in *Public Discourse*. <http://www.thepublicdiscourse.com/2015/06/15145/>, accessed 14/12/2015

“Its treatment should not be directed at the body as with surgery and hormones any more than one treats obesity-fearing anorexic patients with liposuction. The treatment should strive to correct the false, problematic nature of the assumption and to resolve the psychosocial conflicts provoking it. With youngsters, this is best done in family therapy.”

McHugh points to the social pressure upon children as causative of the current increase in gender dysphoria among children, describing it as a “meme”, an element of culture or system of behaviour passed from one individual to another by imitation or non-genetic means. McHugh says:

“The larger issue is the meme itself. The idea that one’s sex is fluid and a matter open to choice runs unquestioned through our culture and is reflected everywhere in the media, the theater, the classroom, and in many medical clinics. It has taken on cult-like features: its own special lingo, internet chat rooms providing slick answers to new recruits, and clubs for easy access to dresses and styles supporting the sex change. It is doing much damage to families, adolescents, and children and should be confronted as an opinion without biological foundation wherever it emerges.”

Another expert, Dr Joseph Berger,<sup>178</sup> is a Toronto psychiatrist and a Distinguished Life Fellow of the American Psychiatric Association. He similarly states that gender dysphoria is a psychological disorder:

“... the so-called ‘confusion’ about their sexuality that a teenager or adult has is purely psychological. ... The medical treatment of delusions or psychosis is not by surgery ... Cosmetic surgery will not make a man become a woman, capable of menstruating, ovulating and having children.”

If individuals are allowed to create their own reality in terms of gender, a number of serious questions arise as to what aspect of human reality will be treated simply as a personal decision in the future. Paul Wolscht, aged 52, is a Canadian mechanic with a wife and seven children. He has transitioned into Stefonknee Wolscht, a six-year-old girl in frilly dresses who lives with adoptive parents and spends her time playing with their grandchildren.<sup>179</sup>

If leading medical people are warning that transgenderism is a psychological condition, why is the SSCA present it as normative behaviour to be embraced?

## 5.2 Gender transition: a medical experiment on children

The US Endocrine Society Practice Guidelines<sup>180</sup> state that:

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178 Comments presented to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights regarding Bill C-279, <https://arpcanada.ca/attachments/article/1724/Testimony%20of%20Dr.%20Berger%20re%20c279.pdf>, accessed online 16/12/2015.

179 <http://www.mercatornet.com/conjugality/view/the-mechanic-who-transitioned-to-a-6-year-old-girl/17394>, accessed 14/1/2016.

180 Hembree W. C. et al., “Endocrine treatment of transsexual persons”, Endocrine Society Practice Guidelines, 2009, <http://press.endocrine.org/doi/full/10.1210/jc.2009-0345> accessed 15/12/2015.

- The effects of hormone treatments and the long-term medical and psychological risks of sex reassignment are unknown and require research.
- The effects of treatments to delay puberty on bone growth and development are unknown and require research.
- The majority (75–80%) of prepubertal children with a diagnosis of gender-identity disorder in childhood do not turn out to be transsexual in adolescence or adulthood.
- Neither biological nor psychological studies provide a satisfactory explanation for the intriguing phenomenon of gender dysphoria.

Estrogen and testosterone, the hormones that are blocked by puberty-blocking medications, also play a role in the extensive neurological development and bone growth which occur during adolescence.<sup>181</sup>

A number of doctors and specialists involved in gender treatments have highlighted the risks associated with gender transition treatments:

- Dr Ximena Lopez founded GENder Education and Care, Interdisciplinary Support (GENECIS) in Texas. “There is a strong need for research in this field to improve the outcomes of our patients,” explains Dr Lopez. “For example, it is still unclear which very young patients with gender dysphoria will persist as transgender individuals through adulthood. There is no objective diagnostic test available that can predict this.”<sup>182</sup>
- Dr Courtney Finlayson is a Pediatric Endocrinologist at Lurie Children’s Hospital and is concerned about providing hormone treatments to children that may cause infertility: “I do worry that at that stage in life many of them may not be able to realise how important that would be to them someday.”<sup>183</sup>
- Eli Coleman,<sup>184</sup> a psychologist who heads the human-sexuality program at the University of Minnesota Medical School, states that the effects of puberty blockers are unknown: “We still don’t know the subtle or potential long-term effects on brain function or bone development. Many people recognize it’s not a benign treatment.”

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181 Boghani, P., “When transgender kids transition, medical risks are both known and unknown, *Frontline* (PBS) online article, June 30, 2015, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/article/when-transgender-kids-transition-medical-risks-are-both-known-and-unknown/> accessed 16/12/2015.

182 Children’s Medical Centre Dallas Website, <https://www.childrens.com/doctor-profile/ximena-lopez>, accessed 16/12/2015

183 Boghani, P., “When transgender kids transition, medical risks are both known and unknown, *Frontline* (PBS) online article, June 30, 2015, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/article/when-transgender-kids-transition-medical-risks-are-both-known-and-unknown/> accessed 16/12/2015.

184 Talbot, M., “About a boy: Transgender surgery at sixteen, *The New Yorker*, March 18, 2015. <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2013/03/18/about-a-boy-2>, accessed online 16/12/2015.

- Dr Johanna Olson, Medical Director of the Center for Transyouth Health and Development at Los Angeles Children's Hospital, is a pediatric transition proponent and yet she admits that the treatment is an experiment. "What's missing in the data right now is: these exact characteristics mean for sure this person is going to be a trans adolescent and adult. We don't have that data."<sup>185</sup>
- Dr Norman Spack, head of the Disorders of Sexual Development (DSD) and Gender Management Service (GeMs) at Boston Children's Hospital, has admitted he can't predict which patients will maintain gender dysphoria later in life: "I'm convinced that sooner rather than later, someone's going to figure something out related to the brains of the 20 per cent transgender kids."<sup>186</sup>

Crucially it must be considered that even drastic gender treatment does not actually change the sex of the patient. A 2011 study of 24 people who had undergone male to female transition treatment found no evidence their brains were feminised.<sup>187</sup>

Most importantly, gender surgery does not treat underlying mental health issues. There is overwhelming evidence that patients who have transitioned gender continue to suffer serious mental illness and are at a greatly increased risk of suicide.<sup>188, 189, 190</sup>

## 5.3 Regret

Many people who undergo transgender treatment deeply regret the change. For example, two men who transitioned to women commented<sup>191</sup>:

"The surgery doesn't alter you genetically. It's genital mutilation. My 'vagina' was just the bag of my scrotum. It's like a pouch, like a kangaroo. What's scary is you still feel like you

<sup>185</sup> Quote from 2012 NBC *Dateline*, broadcast in "Kinpins of pediatric transition confess: We have no idea what we're doing", <http://4thwavenow.com/2015/07/03/kingpins-of-pediatric-transition-confess-we-have-no-idea-what-were-doingunf/>

<sup>186</sup> Interview on Boston Children's Hospital Website: <http://thriving.childrenshospital.org/norman-spack-saving-transgender-lives/>, accessed online 16/12/2015.

<sup>187</sup> Savic, I., Arver, S., "Sex dimorphism of the brain in male-to-female transsexuals", *Cereb Cortex*, 2011 Nov, 21(11), pp.2525-33. DOI: 10.1093/cercor/bhr032. Epub 2011 Apr 5.

<sup>188</sup> Dhejne, C., Lichtenstein, P., Boman, M., Johansson, A.L.V., Långström, N., Landén, M., "Long-term follow-up of transsexual persons undergoing sex-reassignment surgery", Cohort Study in Sweden, 2011, PLoS ONE 6(2): e16885. DOI:10.1371/journal.pone.0016885

<sup>189</sup> Marshall, E. et al., "Non-suicidal self-injury and suicidality in trans people: A systematic review of the literature", *Int Rev Psychiatry*, 2015, Aug 28, pp.1-12.

<sup>190</sup> Hepp, U., Kraemer, B., Schnyder, U., Miller, N., Delsignore, A., "Psychiatric comorbidity in gender identity disorder", *J Psychosom Res*, 2005 Mar, 58(3), pp.259-61.

<sup>191</sup> Batty, D., "Mistaken identity", *The Guardian*, July 31, 2004, <http://www.theguardian.com/society/2004/jul/31/health.socialcare>, accessed 16/12/2015.

have a penis when you're sexually aroused. It's like phantom limb syndrome. It's all been a terrible misadventure. I've never been a woman, just Alan." Alan Finch, Melbourne

"It was horrible, I'd created a monster ... I'm not a woman, I'm a thing – a chimera. As I move into my middle years, I'm genuinely worried that I just don't fit anywhere." Claudia

Walt Heyer changed from male to female and back:

"It's foolishness – allowing and even demanding that a surgeon mutilate your body. It's shameful and painful. And not effective. Surgery cannot correct psychological sickness."<sup>192</sup>

Given adolescents are called adolescents because they are yet to develop good decision-making skills of adults and the often temporary nature of gender dysphoria, it is particularly likely that an adolescent may later regret a decision to change gender, as noted in a 2011 study in the Netherlands, which concluded:

"However, concerns have been raised about the risk of making the wrong treatment decisions, as gender identity could fluctuate during adolescence, adolescents in general might have poor decision-making abilities, and there are potential adverse effects on health and on psychological and psychosexual functioning."<sup>193</sup>

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192 Walt Heyer's Website: Trading My Sorrows <http://www.tradingmysorrows.com/Home>, accessed 16/12/2015.

193 Kreukels BP1, Cohen-Kettenis PT., Puberty suppression in gender identity disorder: the Amsterdam experience, *Nat Rev Endocrinol.* 2011 May 17;7(8):466-72. doi: 10.1038/nrendo.2011.78.

## 6 Conclusion

While purporting to be an anti-bullying program SSCA resources focus heavily on sexual development, sexual attractions, sexual behaviour and sexual identity and present all forms of sexual activity as acceptable, normal and safe. As a result, children and adolescents risk being desensitised to sexual material and may come to consider a wide array of sexual behaviour as safe and normal. At the same time SSCA resources recommend to students organisations which link to sex clubs, pornographic web content, sex shops and adult online communities.

- SSCA promotional material and syllabus content encourages students to:
  - question their sexual orientation and gender identity;
  - adopt a label such as gay, lesbian, queer or “pansexual”;
  - view all forms of sexual activity as acceptable, normal and safe;
  - connect with lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) adult groups outside the school;
  - ask teachers to unblock restricted websites which are blocked by the Department of Education internet filtering system;
  - consider irreversible gender transition treatment, which is dangerous to a person’s physical and mental health, as a valid option.
- The SSCA program was facilitated by the misleading research and extensive lobbying of researchers from the Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society (ARCSHS), La Trobe University.
- The false notion that 10% of students are same sex attracted has been promoted widely by ARCSHS researchers and was used to justify the implementation of the SSCA program. This figure is based on various ARCSHS studies which are inaccurate and misleading.
- There is significant evidence from a number of sources, including the ARCSHS, of a strong association between early sexual debut and same sex attraction. There is also evidence of a strong association between early sexual debut and self-harm and suicide-related behavior. However this association is dismissed in ARCSHS research.
- Bullying is a widespread problem in Australian schools with potentially serious consequences for bullying victims. A number of groups such as youth with disabilities as well as socially isolated youth and LGBT youth tend to have an increased risk of being bullied. The aim of anti-bullying programs should be to prevent all forms of bullying regardless of who the targets may be. The National Safe Schools Framework recommends a whole-school, multifaceted approach to the prevention of bullying. The SSCA program, which is specifically targeted at the LGBT group, is therefore inconsistent with the National Safe Schools Framework recommendation.

- SSCA's presentation to children and adolescents of irreversible gender transition treatment as a valid option is in conflict with the views of leading medical professionals who have stated that gender dysphoria is a psychological condition that should be treated with counselling rather than surgery and hormone therapy. Gender transition treatments do not treat any underlying mental health issues and there is significant evidence that patients who have transitioned gender continue to suffer serious mental health issues and are at greatly increased risk of suicide in comparison to the general population.

## 7 Recommendations

- **That the NSW government ban Safe Schools Coalition Australia from all schools in NSW.**
- That the NSW Government advise the Australian Government to defund SSCA.
- That the NSW Government advise other states and territories to ban SSCA from all schools.
- That an immediate investigation be made by the Children's Advocate to establish whether SSCA has influenced students to become involved in adult oriented organisations or online communities that may place them at risk of harm.
- That urgent investigation be made by the Children's Advocate to establish the number of students who have been influenced by SSCA materials or linked organisations to seek gender transition treatments.
- That investigation be made by the Children's Advocate into the "Claude: Safe Play Workshop" which was held on the premises of the organization Twenty10 on 19<sup>th</sup> January, 2016.
- That the promotion to children and young people of sadomasochistic practices and sex aids be banned by the NSW Government.
- That school Sex Education curricula strongly discourage any form of early sexual activity as this is known to have a strong association with self-harm and suicide related behaviour.
- That investigation be made to establish whether the Sex Education Curriculum being taught in NSW schools is based upon sound medical evidence.
- That the effectiveness of existing anti-bullying strategies and programs in NSW schools be re-evaluated by the Department of Education.



- That investigation be made by the Children's Advocate to establish whether publically funded organisations such as Family Planning NSW are, through their resource materials and web content, sexualising or promoting the sexualisation of children and young people.
- That investigation be made by the NSW Government to establish the amount of public funding received by SSCA through supporter and partner organisations which are funded by the NSW Government.

## Appendix

### External groups advertised on the LGBTIQ notice board at Wollongong High School of the Performing Arts



