

**Supplementary  
Submission  
No 33a**

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

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To Whom it May Concern,

**RE: Additional Information from APS to the NSW Parliament Inquiry conducted by the Children and Young People Committee, into the Sexualisation of children and young people**

The Australian Psychological Society (APS) provided a response in February of this year to the NSW Parliament Inquiry conducted by the Children and Young People Committee, into the Sexualisation of children and young people.

We have recently become aware that this Inquiry has been used as a platform to criticise the Safe Schools Coalition Australia (SSCA) and its associated programs. As neither this program nor issues related to LGBTI children were the focus of the Inquiry, we did not address this in our original submission but would like to provide some additional information given that other submitters have raised these issues.

In our original submission, we pointed to the ways in which children were likely to be exposed to sexualised images, namely: *in physical spaces, such as through the media, advertising, television, in print, in the increasing use and exposure to such images via the internet and social media. In particular, online exposure can happen via online advertising, electronic gaming, social media articles and posts and through pornography.*


The APS believes that discussions of sexuality, gender diversity and more generally sex education (where age appropriate) are not a source of sexualisation *per se*, but as we pointed out in our submission, such discussions can play an important role in addressing and reducing the harmful impacts of sexualisation. In fact, we recommended that: *Engaging children and young people in quality, relationally-based sex education is a protective factor against sexual exploitation and being a victim of abuse, and key to healthy and respectful sexual expectations and practices (Pratt, 2015). School based strategies are recommended to deliver such education, which must go beyond the mechanistic approach (reproduction, sexual diseases) to talk about expectations, norms and equipping them to be critical of the overly sexualised images and scripts they are exposed to.*

It has since come to our attention that some APS material has been used as part of the Australian Christian Lobby (ACL) submission to this Inquiry, who also go on to argue that the SSCA is a source of exposure to sexualised images and content. While the statement citing the APS on the *important elements of sexualisation* is itself accurate, we are concerned because the ACL submission goes on to state that material contained in some of the SSCA teaching materials is a source of sexualisation. The ACL submission is openly critical not only of the program but of the key concepts associated with the program (such as the need for young people to be more informed about the experiences of those identifying as LGBTI, and the existence of transgender identity). We are concerned this criticism may be seen as part of an APS position, which it is not.

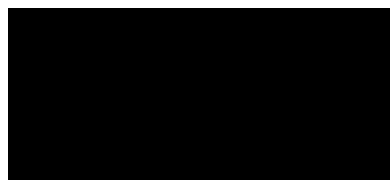
While we are not currently in a position to comment on the efficacy of the SSCA program, we are certainly aware of the evidence of discrimination and bullying of same-sex attracted and gender-questioning young people that the program is designed to counter. We do not share the Australian Christian Lobby's position on the above issues, and wish to make it clear that reference to APS material in the ACL submission cannot be imputed as an association with their position.

Rather the APS, through all of its structures, is committed to the full inclusion of people who are intersex, people who do not identify as heterosexual and/or people who do not identify with their natal assigned sex. The APS remains concerned about the mental health consequences for LGBTI young people who experience discrimination, and supports the need for quality, age-appropriate school based education that reduces stigma and increases the sense of inclusiveness and belonging for all students and their families.

The APS supports this Inquiry and other actions to address and reduce the harmful impact of sexualisation on children and young people.

For further information please contact me on 

Yours sincerely,



Manager, Public Interest  
Australian Psychological Society