



LEADERSHIP • ADVOCACY • SUPPORT

Council of Catholic School Parents NSW/ACT

***PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE NO. 3 – EDUCATION
INQUIRY INTO THE EDUCATION LEGISLATION
AMENDMENT (PARENTAL RIGHTS) BILL 2020***

Hearing – 21 April 2021

***Responses to the Question on Notice and Supplementary
Questions for Mr Peter Grace, Executive Director, Council
of Catholic Schools Parents NSW/ACT***

19 May 2021

1. Why is the Council of Catholic School Parents opposed to the teaching of gender fluidity ideology in schools?

The Council of Catholic School Parent NSW/ACT is opposed to the teaching of gender fluidity ideology in schools because, as an ideology (a set of ideas that aspires to both explain society and change it), it undermines and usurps the role of parents as their children's first educators. As an ideology, gender fluidity ideology presents a closed set of answers without any capacity to question them. This Bill seeks to protect parents' rights in matters of parental primacy, including gender and sexuality.

CCSP's opposition to the teaching of gender fluidity teaching also rests on the premise that education should do no harm. Gender fluidity ideology directs, or at least encourages children and young people to question their identity. The confusion and doubt that this leads to results in stress for students, which escalates into distress. A chain of pathology in children is generated, which can only be described as harmful. While not denying that there are a small number of children who are diagnosed as gender dysphoric and who should be supported, there is little if anything positive to be gained by the promotion of gender fluidity among our children and young people in schools, particularly when it is inconsistent with the family's core values.

Several witnesses at the Committee's public hearing have spoken of the dangerous social contagion that the teaching of gender fluidity ideology presents. This reality ought not be dismissed as readily as some other witnesses propose. Social contagion is a recognised causal factor with respect to youth suicide and is the reason for youth suicide media restrictions. The existence of a social contagion is one explanation for the dramatic rise in the number of children and young people presenting with gender dysphoria. The public hearing has heard multiple testimonies about the confusion and stress and ultimately, distress, that goes with questioning one's sexuality and/or being transgender. CCSP asks the question: who wants that confusion and distress for their child? Schools must not facilitate or promote such confusion and distress.

Another reason for CCSP's opposition to the teaching of gender fluidity ideology is the lack of respect its advocates have for anyone who does not share their view of the world. This is illustrated by an example from *Stand Out*, a resource produced by the Safe Schools Coalition Australia, to promote among other things gender fluidity activism in schools. On page 25 of *Stand Out*, readers are advised that those who do not embrace the school-based activism being promoted are "probably douchebags anyway." Not only does this use of an insulting label illustrate the disrespect gender fluidity ideologues have for people that may hold an alternate view, it has the very real potential to erode the relationship children and young people have with their parents. While putting themselves forward as champions of inclusion, advocates of gender fluidity ideology seek to silence the voices of anyone who would challenge their agenda. At the same time, they set out to prey upon and exploit vulnerable and impressionable children and young people who are craving a sense of belonging in

what is, perhaps, nothing more than a cynical attempt to recruit more and more followers. The extent to which these militant ideologues have the wellbeing of their targets at heart is doubtful. Ironically, these same ideologues characterise anyone who does not embrace their worldview as transphobes and bullies. So, it seems that while there is a spectrum of genders that are acceptable, in the eyes of gender fluidity ideologues, there are only two positions that can be taken – you either embrace gender fluidity ideology or you are a transphobe and a bully. This false dichotomy is far from helpful when it comes to the relationship children have with their parents, their first educators.

Sadly, some well-meaning teachers and school personnel have been caught up in the push to teach gender fluidity ideology in schools. Some are unwitting participants while others have a more deliberate intention of engineering social change.

It is, then, an unfortunate reality that gender fluidity ideology activism has found its way into NSW schools and professional development courses. Examples of these were identified in the Second Reading Speech of the Hon. Mark Latham on 5 August 2020 and do not need to be repeated here. Simply put, the teaching of gender fluidity ideology, in which children and young people are invited, or even instructed, to question their gender or sexuality is not helpful for either the children involved or their parents, who are the first educators of their children.

2. How does the Council of Catholic School Parents see this Bill as serving the best interests of all students?

CCSP sees this Bill as serving the best interests of all students by protecting the rights of parents as the first educators of their children. Further, CCSP believes it is not in the best interests of children and young people in school to promote uncertainty about their gender in the absence of a diagnosis of gender dysphoria.

For the reasons outlined in response to Question 1 above, and, because parents are the first educators of their children whether they are in Catholic schools or other schools, CCSP sees the Bill as serving the best interests of all students.

In the public hearing, the Hon. Anthony D'Adam posed the question: "What business is that of your organisation to tell parents and students and teachers in government schools how they should be instructed? You represent parents in a completely different system. Why do you have an interest in actually telling government schools how they should be run?" As was stated at the hearing, many families of children in Catholic schools also have children enrolled in government and independent schools. Indeed, an increasingly common enrolment pattern is for children to attend a government primary school and then transition to a Catholic secondary school. CCSP defends its position in representing their interests. However, it goes further than this. For the reasons detailed in Question 1 above, CCSP believes that it is in the interests of the common good to legislate to prohibit the teaching of gender fluidity ideology in all schools. To imply that it is no business of CCSP is to challenge the principles that underpin our liberal democracy.

Moreover, the narrow prohibition on the teaching of gender fluidity ideology does not preclude a neutral discussion of gender or sexuality. The Bill merely extends to the area of gender fluidity ideology the existing prohibition on the teaching of dogmatic or polemical theology. In other words, government schools can still teach about religion, but teachers must not impose their own views on students. In a similar way, this Bill seeks to prohibit the promotion of gender fluidity as an ideology, which is in the best interests of all students. The Bill does not attempt to suggest that transgender students do not exist or to demean them in any way as claimed by some of the organisations to have made submissions to the Committee. If the Bill is enacted, teachers will still be able to deal with gender issues in a balanced curriculum-based way.

In CCSP's original submission to the Committee, CCSP drew attention to the salient fact that the narrow prohibition on the teaching of gender fluidity ideology in no way precludes a school from providing appropriate pastoral support for students who may present with gender dysphoria or other sexuality- or gender-related mental health concerns. CCSP also advised that should an additional explanatory note be required to make this abundantly clear, then this should be drafted into the Bill.

3. What is the Council of Catholic School Parents' response to the submission made by Catholic Education Diocese of Parramatta regarding the competing rights of children and parents?

CCSP's response to the submission made by Catholic Education Diocese of Parramatta regarding the competing rights of children and parents takes account of the fact that the Bishop of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Parramatta, the Most Reverend Vincent Long Van Nguyen OFM Conv, made a submission to the Committee on 5 May 2021 (Submission No 82) that supersedes the submission dated 26 February 2021 (Submission No 32) from Catholic Education Diocese of Parramatta.

In light of this, CCSP would like to highlight the following points arising from Bishop Vincent's submission:

- The Diocese of Parramatta, like CCSP, strongly affirms the Catholic teaching that parents are the primary educators of their children in matters of faith and education. Further, the Diocese of Parramatta recognises parents as each child's most influential, primary, and essential educator and actively partners with parents and caregivers, encouraging open communications and supportive learning environments.
- The Diocese of Parramatta affirms the prohibition of teaching gender ideology (gender fluidity) in an educational setting. Like Pope Francis, Bishop Vincent has serious concerns about this ideology. CCSP shares these serious concerns as documented in response to Questions 1 and 2 above.
- The Catholic position is well outlined in *Male and Female He Created Them: Toward a Path of Dialogue on the Question of Gender Theory in Education* and *Amoris Laetitia*. In his apostolic exhortation, *Amoris Laetitia*, Pope Francis says that "the young need to be helped to accept their own body as it was created". CCSP asserts that the Catholic position on the human anthropology of sexuality is clear.
- The Diocese of Parramatta is of the view that the Bill should not be used to prohibit a school from supporting children who are already at risk of marginalisation because of gender identity issues. CCSP agrees and believes that the Bill does not preclude a school from exercising its duty of care in this respect. Should an additional explanatory note be required to remove any doubt of this whatsoever, then CCSP recommends that the Bill be amended to this end.

- The Diocese of Parramatta states that steps must be taken to ensure such legislation respects the rights of children which Australian governments have ratified in international agreements. To the extent that the submission made by Catholic Education Diocese of Parramatta on 26 February 2021 might imply that children's rights compete with parents' rights, then CCSP sees this as arising from too broad a construction of the Bill. The prohibition on the teaching of gender fluidity ideology is a narrow one that does not impinge upon the rights of children and young people. Any departure here by Parramatta from the view held by CCSP comes down to a matter of statutory interpretation, which, as mentioned above, can be addressed by an additional explanatory note. Like the Diocese of Parramatta, CCSP upholds the rights of children. CCSP does not see the Bill as leading to the rights of children and their parents being in competition. Rather, CCSP understands the Bill to support instruments of international law that recognise children's rights and parents' rights as complementary.

The primary purpose of this Bill is to assert the rights of parents in respect of the education of their children, which is an almost universally supported principle. In all but totalitarian societies, the legal presumption is that parents act in the best interests of their children, unless there is objective evidence to the contrary, in which case, child protection legislation exists to deal with that. CCSP acknowledges that parents do not have absolute unfettered rights and that society places legitimate limits on the rights of parents such that, if they fail to act in the best interests of their children, the law intervenes. However, both international and domestic law recognises the right of parents to give effect to the best interests of the child. In terms of who determines what is in children's best interests, the rebuttable presumption, in the absence of objective evidence to the contrary, is that it is the parents. This is overwhelmingly the view of Catholic parents and educators, who hold that schools exist to support parents, not that parents exist to support schools.

Question on Notice:

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: In the Catholic system, what consultation do you have with parents about what you are teaching to them? Mr Grace, if there is anything that you can provide on notice, physical kinds of things that are provided to parents, that would be very helpful for the Committee.

Consultation between Catholic schools and parents and carers takes many forms. In response to the Member's question, CCSP has assembled here the following items to support the evidence given at the public hearing that consultation exists between Catholic schools and parents on matters of parental primacy to help enable a full understanding between the school and the home their mutual respective expectations.

Please find attached the following samples kindly provided by Catholic Education Diocese of Wagga Wagga:

1. Year 5 PDHPE *Growing and Changing* Unit Letter to Parents
2. Year 7 PDHPE *Changes* Unit Letter to Parents
3. Year 10 *Tomorrow Man* and *Tomorrow Woman* Workshops Letter to Parents (sent via school email)
4. Consent Education Stock Letter to Parents for use by School Principals
5. Real Talk *Relationships, Sex, Self-worth and Personal Identity* Workshop Letter to Parents
6. Choicez Media *Raising Children in a Hypersexualised Society* Presentation for Parents Flyer

CCSP provides all the material above as complementing the written submission lodged with the Committee in February 2021 and the appearance of Executive Director, Peter Grace, at the Committee's public hearing in April 2021.

Once again, CCSP is grateful for the opportunity to have input into the Committee's inquiry and is happy to engage in further consultation as required.



HENSCHKE CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

22/10/19

Dear Parents and carers,

This term the students in Year 5 will be studying the unit, *Growing and Changing*. This unit is part of the PDHPE Syllabus where the students are required to learn about the changes that occur during puberty.

The students will be exploring the changes that have happened in their lives in a physical and emotional sense. From there they will then look at how things have either started to change or will be changing. As a class, we will explore what these changes mean and how this will affect students as they grow. At times we will be splitting the class according to gender to allow for students to feel more comfortable when discussing these topics.

During Weeks 2 to 6 this term, all of Year 5 will be participating in weekly activities and discussions with Kate Roberts, our School Wellbeing Practitioner, to focus on their wellbeing and how they can respond to challenges in their lives. Kate will be assisted by other members of Centrecare for these discussions.

We encourage you to try to have open discussions with your children as we progress through this unit and we will be encouraging the students to do the same. This is an important stage of your child's life, and as such, it is important that they have a good basis of understanding of what is happening and what will happen, and also the knowledge of a support network around them.

If you have any questions in regards to this unit, please feel free to contact us.

Kind regards,
Year 5 teachers.



Kildare Catholic College

Phone: 02 6925 3388 Fax: 02 6925 5542 Email: kcc-info@ww.catholic.edu.au

29th April 2016

Dear Parents,

During term 2 your child will take part in the Year 7 Changes Unit. The following is an outline of the objectives of the Year 7 Personal Development/Health/Physical Education programme. We recognise the primary role you have as parents in educating your child. We strongly encourage your child to discuss with you any issues raised. The subject is presented in factual form keeping within the ethos of the Catholic Church in this and other areas.

OBJECTIVES

- To examine the ten stages of growth and development (conception, prenatal, infancy, childhood, puberty, adolescence, adulthood, middle age, old age and death).
- To discuss the spiritual, social and emotional needs at different stages (with particular reference to adolescence and change).
- To discuss attitudes and ways to cope with the changes at each stage.
- To discuss the role of hormones in growth and development.
- To dispel the myths and misunderstandings about conception to emphasise the sacredness of human life.
- To inform the students of the anatomy and physiology of the male and female reproductive systems.
- To appreciate similarities and differences in people physically, mentally and socially at different stages.

If you would like to discuss any aspect of the PDHPE course please ring

Yours sincerely,

Andrew Morton
PD/H/PE Coordinator

From: **KCC Info**

Date: Wed, 27 Mar 2019 at 16:56

Subject: Tomorrow Man/Woman

To:

Dear Parents/Carers,

RE: Tomorrow Man and Tomorrow Woman Workshops for Year 10

On Thursday 28 March 2019 Year 10 students will be participating in workshops facilitated by Tomorrow Man. You can have a look at the website for more information - <https://www.tomorrowman.com.au/>.

The purpose of the workshops is for students to explore both healthy and toxic concepts of masculinity and femininity. Students are guided through activities to help them identify gender stereotypes and to reinvent what it means to them to be a young man or a young woman.

The workshops will be separate for girls and boys.

Kind regards,

Christie Scoble
Assistant Principal

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A Conversation on Consent

As you are aware there has been much media attention on the need for increased awareness of consent and the role of schools in educating students around this topic. Attached are some resources that you might be interested in using if the need arises.

Schools TV Resource

SPECIAL REPORT: A Conversation on Consent

A recent petition, instigated by a former school girl from Sydney, calls for young women to come forward if they have been subjected to sexual assault whilst still at school. It has since gone viral with thousands of young women signing the petition or sharing their stories which are often graphic, disturbing and upsetting.

The petition calls for sex education, in particular consent, to be taught at a younger age in schools. The observation being that consent is being taught too late, with many young people not understanding the boundaries of consent resulting in sexual assault or rape. This call for change has made many schools reassess their curriculum around sex and life education to help protect young people across the nation.

Parents also need to start having conversations around consent sooner rather than later, as some teens experience their first sexual encounter well before the subject matter is delivered. It is not enough for parents or carers to assume that your teenager knows or understands what consent means and the implications surrounding it. It is important for them to learn about boundaries to enable them to respect themselves and their partners.

This Special Report offers parents guidance around normalising the topic of consent to ensure your teenager experiences healthy and respectful relationships. We hope you take time to reflect on the information offered in this Special Report, and as always, we welcome your feedback.

If you do have any concerns about the wellbeing of your child, please contact the school for further information or seek medical or professional help.

Here is the link to your special report https://schooltv.me/wellbeing_news/special-report-conversation-consent

Dear Parents,

We have been invited by your school to come and present on the topics of relationships, sex, self worth and personal identity. Appreciating the important and irreplaceable role you play as parents/guardians, we would like to share with you a little about Real Talk and the content we present.

Real Talk is an organisation that is all about getting REAL on the topics of sex, relationships and personal identity. Based on Catholic Christian values and using personal testimony from a team of dynamic presenters, Real Talk provides up-to-date resources, presentations and programs that help young people to understand God's amazing plan for love and life.

It is important for young people to fully grasp the importance of the gift of relationships and sex and to treat themselves with the dignity they deserve. Young people today receive countless mixed messages about this topic and can be unaware or confused about the precious gift they hold. Due to the specialised and personal nature of the topic many schools use outside presenters.

The Catholic Church teaches that when it comes to sexuality, *"It is imperative to give suitable and timely instruction to young people..."* (CCC Article 1632). Despite the many challenges in presenting this topic *"in order for the value of sexuality to reach its full realisation, education for chastity is absolutely essential"* (Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1997, 18).

We appreciate the importance of the role of parents in the sex education of their children, and we believe that *"Sex education, which is the basic right and duty of parents, must always be carried out under their attentive guidance, whether at home or in educational centres chosen and controlled by them"* (Familiaris Consortio, 37). Our aim is to complement, and not replace, the present instruction of your children.

Real Talk's Love and Life Seminars / Reflection Days are an opportunity for young people to hear from others about the repercussions of poor choices and see the fruits of positive choices. Real Talk presents this topic in a fun, interactive and contemporary way whilst being real and honest. We seek to encourage and empower students to make healthy choices that show respect for others and for themselves.

The presentation is targeted at young people in high school, with adjustments made for every presentation to remain consistent with their physical and emotional development at that age. The purpose of informing you is in part to allow for pre and post discussion with your child.

If you have any queries about your child's suitability or the content of the course, please contact your school or check out our website at www.realtalkaustralia.com. It is a great honour to speak into the lives of the young people we present to. We look forward to meeting your child / children soon!

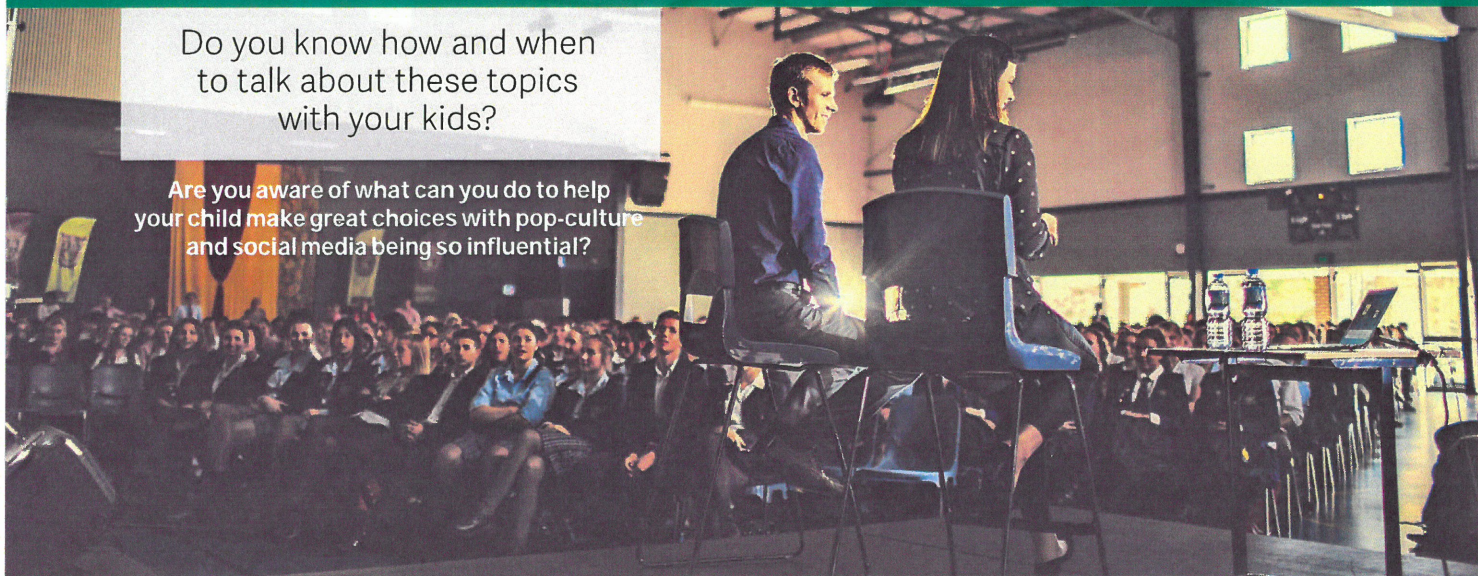
Kind regards,

Paul Ninnies
(Managing Director, Real Talk Australia)

DOES TALKING TO YOUR CHILD ABOUT SEX, PORNOGRAPHY AND SEXTING SEEM AWKWARD AND EMBARRASSING?

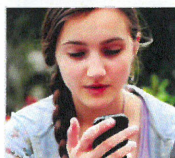
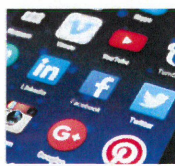
Do you know how and when to talk about these topics with your kids?

Are you aware of what you can do to help your child make great choices with pop-culture and social media being so influential?



WHAT MATTERS

Of all the discussions a parent has with their child, the birds and the bees has been seen as one of the most daunting and most challenging. Parents often think back to the way their parents did the talk with them and remember how awkward it was and therefore decided they would never put their child through that embarrassing conversation. Kids today are being raised in a digital world with access to information like we have never seen before. The average age a young person is first exposed to pornography is now 11 years of age meaning that many kids are now having online pornography step in to be their sex-educator. We will discuss when and how to give your child their first phone and make it a win for both you and them. We will show you how to build an environment where the conversations aren't awkward and we will give you the framework to create an ongoing conversation that your child will thank you for. You can be confident in having these conversations, and this seminar will give you the knowledge, skills and strategies to set you up to be the parent whose child feels free to go to with their questions around these taboo topics.



CURIOSITY

EVER WONDERED HOW YOU CAN EASILY PROTECT YOUR KIDS WHEN THEY ARE ONLINE?

WONDERED HOW YOU CAN GIVE YOUR CHILD THEIR FIRST PHONE AND MAKE IT A WIN FOR YOU AND THEM?

WANTED TO KNOW EXACTLY HOW YOU START THE CONVERSATION ABOUT PORNOGRAPHY WITH YOUR KIDS?

WHAT AGE SHOULD YOU TALK TO YOUR KIDS ABOUT SEX?

These concerns and many more will be addressed at the upcoming parents workshop

RAISING CHILDREN IN A HYPERSEXUALISED SOCIETY

🕒 6pm - 7:30pm

📅 Mon 24th September, 2018

📍 Kildare Catholic College Hall,
Coleman Street, Wagga Wagga
NSW, 2650

Open to all parents of Kildare and Mater Dei.

For more information:

www.yourchoicez.com.au