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Queensland plays catch up to South Australia on LGBTIQ+ students' safety

The South Australian Department for Education and Child Development has today announced updated procedures supporting same sex attracted, intersex and gender diverse students, highlighting the significant policy shortcoming here in Queensland.

The South Australian policy document, 'Supporting same sex attracted, intersex and gender diverse students'¹, outlines mandatory responsibilities for all schools and preschools that staff are required to adhere to.

Janet Berry, Chairperson, Queensland Action Group for LGBTIQ+ Students, is calling on the Queensland Education Department and the Minister, the Honourable Kate Jones, to do the same for Queensland students.

"According to the Australian Human Rights Commission² 11% of Australians are LGBTIQ so there are likely to be LGBTIQ+ children and young people in almost **every classroom**" Ms Berry said.

"LGBTIQ+ young people at schools where protective policies are in place are more likely to feel safe compared with those in schools without similar policies (75 per cent compared with 45 per cent).

"They are almost 50 per cent less likely to be physically abused at school, less likely to suffer other forms of homophobic abuse, less likely to self-harm and less likely to attempt suicide if there are policies in place.

"We acknowledge that some Queensland schools are very supportive of LGBTIQ+ students, are delivering school policies that encourage the understanding and acceptance of diversity by staff and students and do not countenance bullying" she said.

Following the Tyrone Unsworth tragedy in late 2016, the Queensland Action Group for LGBTIQ+ students suggest the Queensland Education Department follow South Australia's lead.

Ms Berry said "there needs to be immediate action to address homophobic and transphobic bullying and prevent more mental health issues, absenteeism and suicide among LGBTIQ+ young people in Queensland schools".

"We believe further pre-service and in-service teacher training needs to occur".

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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REFERENCES

1. <https://www.decd.sa.gov.au/sites/g/files/net691/f/supporting-same-sex-attracted-intersex-and-gender-diverse-students-policy.pdf?v=1480468927>
2. <https://www.humanrights.gov.au/face-facts-lesbian-gay-bisexual-trans-and-intersex-people>