



Its four months since we last published a newsletter, but a busy four months. And plenty to tell you about.

Queensland Department of Education

The Honourable Kate Jones, Minister for Education, has still not accepted our request to meet with her, despite writing many times.

These are the critical issues we would still like to talk to her about:

- The only LGBTIQ+ policy on the Department of Education website remains a two page document [Diversity in Queensland Schools – Information for Principals](#). This is despite research telling us that Queensland LGBTIQ+ students feel less safe than those in other states due to lack of policy.
- The Department cannot tell us how schools and teachers will be trained to create caring, inclusive and supportive schools for LGBTIQ children when Safe Schools is no longer available in Queensland after 31 October. This is despite a [recent survey](#) of South Australian teachers finding that transgender or gender diverse children often experience schools as places of marginalisation and exclusion. In the primary school environment there are high levels of bullying by other children and a lack of understanding and support from school staff.
- The failure to include children and young people of diverse sexuality, gender or bodies in the school curriculum and programs in Queensland contravenes the Anti-Discrimination Act 1991 (Qld) and the Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth) and its Sex Discrimination Amendment (Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Intersex Status) Act 2013 (Cth).

The Queensland Queering Education Consultative Committee (QQECC)

The Queensland Queering Education Consultative Committee (QQECC) has been established. The QQECC's vision is that lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersex, queer and plus¹ (LGBTIQ+) young people in Queensland actively participate in quality education, and that they are offered the opportunity to an equitable education inclusive of their needs and values. The purpose of the Committee is to provide advice to the Queensland Government on policy and implementation issues related to LGBTIQ+ themes and issues in education.

The QQECC will provide to the Minister for Education and the Department advice on policy and implementation issues relating to LGBTIQ+ issues and themes in early childhood education, school education, and vocational education and training. This may include:

- Early childhood education and care;
- School attendance and engagement;
- Educational attainment; and
- Parental and community engagement.

In addition, the Minister and Departmental officials may request that the Committee provide advice on specific policies and initiatives on an as-needed basis. For further information, please contact Dr Lisa van Leent (lisa.vanleent@qut.edu.au)

1. The acronym LGBTIQ+ is intended to be inclusive of a range of genders and sexualities; including agender and asexual. This term is used to acknowledge fixed gender and sexuality categories, but it also acknowledges that genders and sexualities are not necessarily fixed to any individual, place or time.

Support for LGBTIQ+ students in Catholic Schools

[Edmund Rice Education Australia](#) are working to provide safe and inclusive learning environments for all students, in particular for same-sex attracted and gender diverse young people. They have developed a set of documents to support Catholic schools in striving for the wellbeing and safety of their students, particularly in regard to combatting homophobia and transphobia. These documents indicate a clear position and provide guidance and support for a ‘whole school’ response to the care of young people.

Initial teacher education programs - do they include LGBTIQ material?

Some universities in Australia provide initial teacher education programs that include stand-alone courses or in-depth content and pedagogical strategies addressing issues pertaining to diverse gender and sexualities and intersex topics. We have found little evidence of such content in Queensland teacher training courses.

The Action Group has met with the Queensland College of Teachers to discuss the inclusion of content that addresses sexuality and gender identity during initial teacher education in Queensland. At the meeting there was positive and practical discussion around the need for availability of material and the need to communicate with individual universities. We are currently arranging further meetings with Professors of Education at Queensland Universities.

Submission to Queensland Parliamentary Inquiry

The Queensland Government are conducting an “Inquiry into improving the delivery of respectful relationships and sex education relevant to the use of technology in Queensland state schools”.

The Action Group has written a submission to this inquiry based on the legal obligation of the Queensland education system and schools to provide all LGBTIQ+ young people with a high-quality schooling experience that is free from discrimination based on their sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or intersex status.

You can read our submission in full by accessing the list of submissions (there are 30 of them!) on the [parliament website](#).

Australian Government Review

The *Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools*, led by Mr David Gonski AC, will examine the evidence base and provide advice on the most effective and efficient use of funding to improve school performance and student achievement and prepare Australia’s young people for a lifetime of opportunity in a rapidly changing world.

Submissions are invited on how to improve outcomes and educational performance for all students, ‘including vulnerable students’.

The Action Group is preparing a submission on the need to support LGBTIQ+ students in all schools, to eliminate homophobia, transphobia and intersex abuse that can result in mental health issues, drug and alcohol dependence, self-abuse and suicidality currently experienced by many of these students. They should feel safe at school, in order to achieve their full educational potential.

The Queensland Minister for Health

The Queensland Minister for Health and Ambulance Services, Cameron Dick, has announced an extra \$338,000 in funding to provide assistance for four non-government organisations, Lifeline, Kids Helpline, Queensland AIDS Council and Open Doors Youth Service to help them deal with an increase in LGBTIQ+ people reaching out for help until the end of November, when the postal survey is complete.

The Respectful Relationships program in Queensland Schools

The Queensland Department of Education has developed a [respectful relationships education program](#) for students in response to the Queensland Government approach to end domestic and family violence.

The Queensland Government approach is based on the report of the Special Taskforce on Domestic and Family Violence in Queensland, *Not Now, Not Ever: Putting an End to Domestic and Family Violence in Queensland*. The report makes 140 recommendations. Recommendation 14 of the report specifically advocates that the: “Queensland Government includes LGBTI specific elements in the communication strategy to raise awareness of domestic and family violence in the LGBTI community, remove the stigmas around reporting and seeking help, and providing LGBTI victims with advice on where to go for support.”

The resources included in the Queensland Department of Education respectful relationships education program for Prep to Year 12 students appear to make no reference to same-sex relationships or those involving bisexual, transgender or intersex people.

Trans @ School forums

Two Forums are being held in Brisbane in the next few weeks aimed at understanding important issues affecting trans children and young people. An outcome of the forums will be the development of resources to promote a fair and inclusive education system in Queensland.

Trans@School for the Community, Saturday 16 September 2017, 10am – 12.30pm, 30 Helen St, Teneriffe QLD.

Trans@School for Educators and Stakeholders Forum, Friday 6 October, 9am -11.30am, Level 17, 53 Albert Street, Brisbane.

The Forums are organised by the LGBTI Legal Service, Anti-Discrimination Commission Queensland and Legal Aid Queensland. If you would like more information, or would like to attend the Forums please contact: heather.corkhill@adcq.qld.gov.au

Trans Pathways

Trans Pathways is the largest Australian study ever conducted into the mental health and care pathways of trans and gender diverse young people and the [final report](#) is now available.

Trans young people are at very high risk for poor mental health, self-harming and suicide attempts. Around 3 in every 4 trans young people have experienced anxiety or depression. Four out of 5 trans young people have ever engaged in self-harm, and almost 1 in 2 trans young people have ever attempted suicide (48%).

The senior researcher in this study has said “**while we know that people who are trans do have a higher frequency of mental health difficulties than the general population in Australia, it is important to emphasise that this is not because an individual identifies as trans. Rather, these difficulties are largely caused by external factors – in other words, how the world perceives and treats trans people.** This was borne out by the experiences of the young people we heard from, many of whom reported they had been subjected to transphobia and bullying.”

Please share this newsletter with your family, friends and work colleagues. If you would like to be added to the mailing list please contact:

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