

Sex class trauma for students

Lauren Novak

An outraged mother has removed her three children from a Riverland school following a controversial sex education session that was not supervised by school staff.

Renmark High School students were shown pictures of adults who had undergone transgender transformation surgery, while incest and bestiality were also discussed, parents and students say.

Nicks Gayland's daughter Courtney, 14, said the content "should not have been anywhere near our ears". The school has apologised.

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I never signed my kids up for lesson in incest



Lauren Novak

An outraged mother has removed her three children from a Riverland school following a controversial, unsupervised sex education session.

Nicks Gayland's daughter Courtney White was one of two Year 9 students who felt so uncomfortable that they asked to exit the toilet to get out of the session.

The hour-long presentation was delivered to a class of Year 9 girls on March 22 by an outside speaker engaged by FocusOne Health, a mental health organisation operated by non-profit FocusOne Health.

No school staff member was

present to supervise this session.

In a letter to parents, Renmark High School principal Matt Evans apologised that the school also did not notify parents about the presentation ahead of time, and said he had arranged an internal review.

Parents and students have told The Advertiser that during the session there was discussion about incest (sexual contact between biological family members) and bestiality (illegal sexual contact between humans and animals).

Mr Evans said the school was "taking the matter very seriously" and the speaker had been suspended from operating in government schools

while the Education Department investigates.

A government spokeswoman said students had been offered extra counselling.

Ms Gayland, 40, said she planned to enrol Courtney, her younger sister and her older brother in a private school next term.

Courtney, 14, told The Advertiser she and her classmates were not told what the session would be about before entering the room.

"We just got sent there and just got talked at about all this yucky stuff," she said.

"It should not have been anywhere near our ears.

"I just wanted to leave the whole time."

Classmate Imelma Wardenberg, 14, said the speaker showed explicit and showed "graphic" images of adults who had undergone transgender transformation surgery without warning.

Imelma said she had barely returned to the school since the session.

Opposition education spokesman John Gardner, a former education minister, said the school "should have had a teacher present".

"Schools have a duty of care to students," Mr Gardner said.

"It's really important for parents to be advised in advance about sessions like this and it's really disappointing that that didn't happen in this case.

"The government needs to make sure that those rules are very clearly understood so that a situation like this can be rectified at the time, if it ever happens again."

FocusOne Health board chairman Dr Ian Gardiner confirmed "a third experience speaker engaged by FocusOne Health delivered a presentation to students at Renmark High School on LGBTQIAs and respectful relationships".

He said the organisation took concerns from parents "seriously" and was "continuing our work to ensure everything we do is aligned with evidence and best practice and is safe and appropriate for young people".



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School sex ed fallout goes on

Murray Pioneer, Renmark



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Politicians speak out about Renmark High School incident

**ALEXANDRA BULL
and HUGH SCHUITEMAKER**

A HOST of South Australian politicians – including the region's State and Federal MPs – have voiced their concerns over a presentation made by headspace Berri at Renmark High School last month.

The presentation, which was presented to year 9 girls, covered topics including bestiality and incest, with no note sent home prior and no teacher present in the room while the presentation was underway.

Chaffey MP Tim Whetstone said "as a parent I have grave concerns with the way the organisation came into the school".

"It was obviously unchecked and the content of the presentation had not been vetted. I would be horrified to think my kids were put through the trauma of what this presentation meant to young year 9s," he said.

"It's a federally funded organisation, and I think there needs to be a level of accountability for the funding to be granted to organisations, particularly when that's the content of the presentation.

"The department must quickly identify every Riverland school where this material has been presented – I have very strong concerns for the mental health and wellbeing of both students and parents that may have

been impacted by this material and are essentially suffering in silence while an investigation takes place.

"Counselling and support should be immediately made available to every student who has been subject to this material, not just at Renmark High School."

Two parents have pulled their students out of Renmark High School in the fallout of the presentation.

"The school has a level of responsibility... they should have been there to monitor and to have the presentation documented, so they knew what the students were going to be presented with," Mr Whetstone said.

"It demonstrates there's a level of complacency when dealing the LGBTQIA+ agenda.

"In today's world there's huge social pressures put on our young ones. As parents we have high expectations of our children to be good leaders for the future, but when this sort of thing is presented to them, it traumatises kids."

Mr Whetstone added "headspace have a lot to answer for (regarding) the content of that presentation".

"The school (had) a responsibility to adjudicate and have a presence in that classroom when this presentation was taking place.

"This issue has been discovered after the fact, (but) it

should never have happened. The content of the presentation should have been known.

"Kids were excusing themselves from the class because they were scared or intimidated.

"I'm very disappointed this has happened, and there needs to be a level of scrutiny."

Barker MP Tony Pasin said he was "appalled and disgusted" upon learning of the presentation.

"I have spoken to the CEO of Focus One Health this morning and voiced my strongest disappointment at what has occurred. As part of that conversation, I have been given assurances that it will not happen again," Mr Pasin said.

"As an ardent supporter of headspace, I have expressed my concerns regarding the reputation risk this incident poses to the organisation, not only locally in the Riverland but as a national brand.

"The federally funded organisation does exceptional work to support the mental health and wellbeing of young Australians and while I strongly condemn the content included in a presentation made to an unsupervised group of year 9 students at Renmark High School last month, I hope that it does not affect the willingness of families to reach out to headspace when needed.

Shadow Minister for



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Education John Gardner said "this is a shocking and unacceptable incident, and we understand the Education Department has blocked the person in question from doing their presentation at any other schools in the future".

"We are calling on the Malianuskas Labor Government to provide assurances this presentation has not been offered at other schools and we need answers as to why no teacher was present to take the appropriate action when the nature of the content became clear."

In a post to his Facebook page, Ben Hood MLC said "I've spoken to many parents about their growing concerns about what is taught by third-party providers in our schools and it seems that Renmark may not be an isolated incident".

"I am calling on the State Education Minister Blair Boyer to immediately put a halt to all third-party providers entering our schools to deliver 'Sexual and Respectful Relationship' content and curriculum until a full audit and investigation can be conducted," he said.

"We need to make sure that our children are protected and that mistakes like what has occurred at Renmark High School do not happen again."

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School sex ed fallout goes on

THE fallout from the Renmark High School-headspace Berri sex education information session has continued this week, with local politicians among those wading into the controversy.

Delivered to year 9 girls without parental consent and minus any teachers, the presentation – delivered on March 22 – exposed students to the concepts of incest and bestiality, and enraged some parents.

Chaffey MP Tim Wheatstone said he was “horrified” by the content of the presentation, while Liberal Party colleague and Barker MP Tony Pasin said he was “appalled” and had spoken to the CEO of Focus One Health.

Riverland-based Liberal MLC, Dr Nicola Centofanti has described the incident as “abhorrent and quite frankly unbelievable” and vowed to bring the matter to state parliament this week.

The controversy has hit the front page of The Advertiser and made TV news services.

Yesterday Dr Kevin Donnelly, of the ACU’s PM Glynn Institute, became the latest public figure to weigh in on the issue.

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