

## EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TRAINING

### SENATE LEGISLATION COMMITTEE - QUESTIONS ON NOTICE 2004-2005 ADDITIONAL ESTIMATES HEARING

**Outcome:** 1

**Output Group:** 1.2 – Assistance to individuals including those with special needs

#### **DEST Question No. E874\_05**

Senator Harradine provided in writing.

#### **Question:**

Please provide a copy of the letter sent by the Education Minister to the State and Territory education authorities asking for information on their sex education curriculum, as well as a copy of the replies.

#### **Answer:**

*Sex education curriculum*

A copy of the letter sent by the Minister for Education, Science and Training to State and Territory government and non-government education authorities was provided previously. With regard to replies to this letter, the information has now been received and collated. A summary of this information is included at Attachments A and B.

## Attachment A

### Sexual education programmes in education jurisdictions

#### State schools

Jurisdiction	Respects religious and cultural diversity	Parental consent	Years	Curriculum area
<b>New South Wales</b> Department of Education and Training	Not stated	Yes (right to withdraw)	K–12	Personal Development, Health and Physical Education
<b>Victoria</b> Education services	Yes	Right to withdraw	Primary to secondary, focussed in prep year; Years 5–6; Years 9–10	Health and Physical Education domain of Physical, Personal and Social Learning strand
<b>Queensland</b> Department of Education and the Arts	Yes	Not stated / parental involvement and consultation is encouraged	1–10	Health and Physical Education/ Human Relationships Education
<b>Western Australia</b> Department of Education and Training	Not stated	Not stated	K–12	Not stated
<b>South Australia</b> Department of Education & Children's Services	Yes	Encourages partnerships with home/ parental consent required for a current pilot programme	K–12	Health and Physical Education Area/ Personal and Social Development and Health of Individuals and Communities
<b>Tasmania</b> Department of Education	Not stated	Not stated Meetings with parents held prior to deliver of programmes from external agencies	K–10	Personal Futures, one of the Essential Learnings
<b>Northern Territory</b> Department of Employment, Education and Training	Yes	Not stated but encourages partnerships with home	7–10 approx (Bands 4 and 5)	Physical Education Learning Area and the EsseNTial Learnings
<b>Australian Capital Territory</b> Department of Education and the Arts	Yes	Not stated / parents can participate in curriculum development through school boards	K–12	Health and Physical Education

## Catholic Education Commission

Jurisdiction	Respects religious and cultural diversity	Parental consent	Years	Curriculum area
Catholic Education Commission New South Wales	Catholic values	Not stated	K–12	Personal Development Health and Physical Education
Catholic Education Office Archdiocese of Melbourne	Catholic values, methodology includes respecting other world views	Not stated	K–12	Health and Physical Education
Queensland Catholic Education Commission	Catholic values	Not stated	Not stated	Personal Development
Catholic Education Office of Western Australia	Catholic values	Not stated	K–12	Cross curriculum including Religious Education and Health and Physical Education
Catholic Education South Australia	Catholic values	Not stated	Reception to Year 12	Family Life Education Program
Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn Catholic Education Office	Catholic values	Not stated	Primary and secondary	Personal Development Health and Physical Education supported by Religious Education Curriculum
Catholic Education Office Diocese of Darwin	Catholic values	Yes	Transition to Year 12	Family Life Education Program

## Independent schools

### Independent Schools Council of Australia

Jurisdiction	Respects religious and cultural diversity	Parental consent	Years	Curriculum area
Association of Independent Schools of NSW	Not stated	Not stated	Appears to be concentrated between Years 6–10	
Association of Independent Schools Victoria	Not stated	Not stated	Years 5–9	Health and Physical Education (Some also in Science and Religious Studies)

<b>Jurisdiction</b>	<b>Respects religious and cultural diversity</b>	<b>Parental consent</b>	<b>Years</b>	<b>Curriculum area</b>
Association of Independent Schools of Queensland	Not stated/ wide variety of beliefs and diversity of values across the schools	Not usually	Year 1–10	Health and Physical Education
Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia	Not stated	Usually sought and granted/ consultation with school community	6–10	Usually Health or Physical Education, and to a lesser extent religious education (as appropriate to school faith).
Association of Independent Schools of South Australia	Religious ethos tends to determine the values	Parents may have right to withdraw	More extensive programs run in Years 9–11/no consistency in ages	Health/Science/ Religious Studies
Association of Independent Schools Northern Territory Inc.	Area of cultural sensitivity	Most seek parental permission	Children over 12/some primary schools offer aspects in Year 6	Health; Science; Social and Cultural Education; Christian Studies and other Bible Studies; Personal Development Program

NB: The Association of Independent Schools of Tasmania and the ACT provided survey responses from individual schools; however, the results were unclear and have not been incorporated.

### **Christian Schools Australia**

<b>Christian Schools Australia</b>	<b>Respects religious and cultural diversity</b>	<b>Parental consent</b>	<b>Years</b>	<b>Curriculum area</b>
Christian Schools Australia (CSA)	Based on Christian Biblical principles	Consultation and collaboration with parents	6–12	Health Education; Human Biology; Personal Development Health and Physical Education; Christian Studies and Early Childhood Studies

### **Additional information**

Additional information was provided in several of the responses from educational jurisdictions to Dr Nelson's inquiry into the content of sexual education programmes.

This additional information has been organised under the headings of *content of programmes* and *recent initiatives* (below).

### **State Schools**

#### **New South Wales**

##### Content of programmes

Specific content and teaching methods determined at the school level.

Courses include:

- Cross Roads (sexual relationships: rights and responsibilities)
- Sexual health care.

Resources include:

- *Talking Sexual Health*, developed by the Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society at La Trobe University. This resource is designed for use with students in Years 9 and 10, but also suitable for Years 11 and 12 students.
- *Negotiating Consent*, developed by the NSW Strategy to Reduce Violence against Women, targeted at Years 10 to 12.

##### Recent initiatives

- In partnership with NSW Health and FPA Health, the Department conducted a series of state-wide professional development workshops for secondary teachers relating to the *Talking Sexual Health* resource.
- 230 teachers from over 150 secondary schools participated in the training.
- The New South Wales State Government recently ordered an inquiry into the planning and delivery of resource material. The inquiry responds to a controversy over the programme 'Dealing with Difference', which was recently banned from schools.

#### **Victoria**

##### Content of programmes

- HIV/AIDS, Sexually Transmitted Infections, and blood-borne viruses prevention

#### **Queensland**

##### Content of programmes

- Schools may use their own funds to access outside organisations to supplement their school programmes.

##### Recent initiatives

- Education Queensland has developed a *Human Relationships Education for Queensland State Schools* policy.

## **Western Australia**

### Content of programmes

- Individual schools have flexibility to select appropriate resources.
- Public schools are encouraged to involve parents and the wider community in the development of all teaching and learning programmes.
- The *Growing and Developing Healthy Relationships* resource includes a sample letter schools may use to inform parents of the details and intent of their programmes.

### Resources include:

- The Department of Health and the Department of Education and Training, in collaboration with other education sectors and agencies, have developed a suite of resources known as *Growing and Developing Healthy Relationships*.
- (The Catholic Education Office was involved in development of these resources, but has chosen not to distribute the resources. Catholic schools use aspects of the resources.)
- A range of other resources including *Talking Sexual Health* (La Trobe University), and a range of services offered by government and non-government agencies such as Family Planning Western Australia.
- The *Guiding Principles for the Provision and Practice of Sexual Health Education*, developed by the Department of Health of Western Australia, provides schools with contemporary advice that is used to develop curricula.

### Recent initiatives

- In February 2005 the Department funded the training of 23 district-based facilitators to support schools in providing relationship and sex education.

## **South Australia**

### Content of programmes

- Teachers and schools encouraged to work in partnerships with school community members and parents to develop and deliver programmes that address needs of learner and school community.
- The programs aim to delay sexual activity, and encourage respect for the values of individuals and the rights of young people not to be sexually active.
- Programs encourage parents to attend information sessions.

### Resources include:

#### The pilot program SHARE

- The SHARE programme is currently being piloted in 15 South Australian DECS secondary schools. Three year pilot program is now in its third year.
- SHARE targets Middle Years and Senior Years learners (11–15 year olds). However, the pilot program has only been delivered to Years 8, 9 and 10 students. Aspects of the course could be adapted to Upper Primary students (Years 6-7).
- A teaching manual, *Teach it Like it is*, complements the program.
- SHARE program and resource is based on national and international research, and emphasises: unacceptably high levels of sexual activity; sexual coercion; discrimination and harassment; sexually transmitted infections; unplanned teenage pregnancy; and teenage abortion.
- The program promotes the values of: respect; care for the self and others; honesty; safety; inclusion; integrity; and responsibility.
- Students cannot participate in the program without parental consent.

The principles of SHARE reflect those that underpin sexual education, health and relationships learning programs in SA DECS schools and sites.

## Family Life SA

- The Family Life Movement provides school-based, family based and teacher training and development programs and resources relating to sexual education, sexual health and relationships. These programs are targeted at the Primary level (Years 3–7).

## Tasmania

### Content of programmes

- Relationship education is underpinned by the notion of abstinence from sexual activity.
- Many schools, particularly primary schools, employ services of external agencies. Their services are purchased by parent bodies in schools that choose to expend their funds in this fashion.
- Meetings with families are always held prior to these education sessions to gain understanding and agreement about the content and focus of such sessions.

Resources include:

- *Talking Sexual Health*.

### Recent initiatives

- A recently released report concerning teenage pregnancy in Tasmania has initiated a review of the responses to this issue at all levels within the education system.
- The review includes teacher professional learning opportunities, and provision in schools for pregnant and parenting students.

## Northern Territory

### Content of programmes

Curriculum topics include:

- male and female reproductive systems
- the endocrine system and sexual development
- Conception control and values associated with each method
- skills in negotiating sexual behaviour
- forming and maintaining close relationships
- domestic violence, sexual harassment and emotional support
- feelings in the expression of human sexuality
- sexually transmitted diseases.

### Recent initiatives

- Sexual Health Education is identified as an area of priority.
- Areas of particular priority are: indigenous sexual health education, and related professional development for teachers to address sexual health education in Indigenous communities.

## Australian Capital Territory

### Recent initiatives

- Currently moving to implement a new framework for the curriculum for all government and non-government schools, with Essential Learning Achievements as the core.
- Sexual health related outcomes will be addressed through this essential component of the curriculum.

## National Catholic Education Commission

### **Catholic Education Commission—New South Wales**

The response from the Catholic Education Commission NSW discusses the results of a 2003 poll of Year 11 students conducted by the Australian Democrats ('Year 11 School Poll').

There are significant differences in the treatment of these issues between government, Catholic and non-Catholic Christian schools. Interestingly, students from Catholic schools indicated slightly greater coverage of sex and gender than students in government schools for all subsets other than “Safe Sex and STDs”.

### **Catholic Education Office—Archdiocese of Melbourne**

Resources include:

- *Health Promoting Schools* framework, developed by the World Health Organisation
- Growing Together in Life and Love
- REsource: an online resource designed for use by Catholic Secondary Teachers. The Ethics unit includes *Early Life* (abortion); *Euthanasia*; and *Sex and Soap Operas*.
- *To Know and Worship Love*.

### **Independent Schools**

#### **Christian Schools Australia**

##### Content of programmes

Sex education programmes are based on Christian Biblical principles:

- God made us in His own image—Genesis 2:21–23
- God has purposed that man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh—Matthew 19:5.

They are based on a harm prevention philosophy.

- The best way to avoid harm associated with sexual health issues is abstinence outside of marriage, and faithfulness within marriage.
- The best way to avoid psychological and physical harm associated with the abuse of sexual relationships is to ensure that they take place in context of faithful, committed, respectful, heterosexual marriage relationships.

#### **Association of Independent Schools New South Wales**

The survey of 53 schools found 6 that reported they did not offer sex education programmes.

##### Content of programmes

Curriculum topics include:

- Sexual Health, Family Planning Association
- Year 10 Sexuality
- Sex and Sexuality Workshops
- ‘Straight Talk’: sex has a price tag (Youth Purposes WD)
- Community Health
- Interrelate
- Relationships/Sex Ed
- Parent Information Evenings
- Christian Studies
- Right to Life
- Decisions, Choices and Outcomes

#### **Association of Independent Schools of Victoria**

##### Content of programmes

Parental or community involvement occurs through formal structures such as curriculum committees and surveys and some information evenings.



Resources include:

- *Talking Sexual Health*
- *Catching On*
- *Pride and Prejudice*

Providers include:

- Family Life: a private provider of programs for Grades 1–12 students. Many schools supplement the Family Life program with classroom discussions. Parents are often invited to Family Life information evenings.

Topics:

Various topics submitted by individual schools, including puberty, reproduction, birth, conception, safe sex, pregnancy contraception, STD?AIDS, same sex attraction/homophobia

- relationships, contraception, date rape
- 'girls-only sessions' and parallel 'boys-only sessions' in some schools.

### **Association of Independent Schools of Queensland**

#### Content of programmes

Resources include:

- *Growing and Developing Healthy Relationships* (A three volume series developed by Curtin University for the Western Australian Department of Education. Maps a developmentally appropriate approach to sex education across preschool to Year 9.)
- *Talking Sexual Health*
- Somazone (an interactive CD that some schools do not consider appropriate because it takes a harm minimisation approach. Aimed at Secondary school students.)
- Family Planning Queensland

### **Association of Independent Schools of South Australia**

#### Content of programmes

The majority of schools use or draw on programmes developed by outside organisations.

There are five core programs or organisations:

- Family Life South Australia
- Life Education SA
- True Love Waits
- Family Life Education Curriculum Guidelines (Catholic Education)
- Shine SA.

### **Association of Independent Schools of the Northern Territory**

- Sex education is an area of sensitivity in schools serving predominantly Indigenous populations. Two schools reported that they offered their program in association with an Indigenous health clinic.