



Gay and Lesbian Health Alliance of SA  
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6 November 2015

Senator The Hon Simon Birmingham  
Minister for Education and Training  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600  
Mail to: [senator.birmingham@aph.gov.au](mailto:senator.birmingham@aph.gov.au)

Dear Minister Birmingham

**Re: The Safe Schools Coalition**

I am writing to you today to express my gratitude to the Commonwealth Government for its support of same sex attracted, transgender, inter-sex and gender diverse young people and students, via the Safe Schools Coalition.

As Chair of the Gay and Lesbian Health Alliance of South Australia, I am very concerned about the challenges faced by same-sex attracted and gender diverse youth.

The *Writing Themselves In 3* Report (2010) based on a sample of 3000 same sex attracted young people found that 75% had experienced homophobic bullying and abuse and 18% physical assault.

The Beyond Blue Report *From Blues to Rainbows* surveyed 189 trans and gender diverse young people. It found that 65% had experienced verbal and 21% physical abuse. Even more worrying is that 70% had self harmed and 37% had attempted suicide.

The goals of the Safe Schools Coalition Australia are to:

1. Reduce homophobic and transphobic behaviour and inter-sex prejudices in Australian schools; and
2. Increase support for, and actively include, same sex attracted, inter-sex and gender diverse students, school staff and families.

These goals, and the promotion, advisory and support services the Safe Schools Coalition provides to some 56 schools in both the private and public sectors in South Australia (455 nationally) are

appropriate and well targeted towards a clear area of concern that is compatible with the vision of the *National Safe School Framework* to build safe school communities for all.

The Safe Schools Coalition does not advocate particular sex practices or procedures, but rather self respect, acceptance and support for trans and gender diverse young people. The Coalition program aims to assist them to be themselves at school rather than be fearful. The paramount concern is for their safety and health. It is a program that changes lives for the better.

Again, I thank you and your Government for your support of the Safe Schools Coalition, and trust that, despite the irresponsible and unfounded attacks from another quarter on the work of the Coalition, your support will be ongoing. A supportive and inclusive school community is essential for all students to be healthy and happy and to be able to reach their full potential.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ian Purcell', is centered on a light grey rectangular background.

Ian Purcell AM  
Chair  
Gay and Lesbian Health Alliance of SA