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By email

The Honourable Chris Picton MP
Minister for Health and Wellbeing
Member for Kaurna

Dear Minister Picton,

RE: Review of gender diversity services for children and young people in SA

[SA Rainbow Advocacy Alliance \(SARAA\)](#) would like to express our concern and opposition to the Honourable Frank Pangallo MLC's proposed review of gender diversity services in South Australia, following a review of such services provided by NHS England (the Cass Review)¹.

We thank you for the South Australian Labor Party's opposition to Pangallo's proposed parliamentary inquiry into gender affirming care in February this year and write to provide you with our response to the Cass review to assist you with your continued support.

As the peak representative body for LGBTIQ+ South Australians, SARAA rejects the proposed need for an independent review into gender diversity services in South Australia as:

1. Gender-affirming care provided in South Australia is substantially different to the provision of such care by NHS England and its findings cannot be directly applied to the South Australian context. A key recommendation of the Cass Review was that "*children and young people referred to NHS gender services receive a holistic assessment of their needs to inform an individualised care plan. This should include screening for neurodevelopmental conditions... and a mental health assessment*". Such approaches are standard within the provision of gender affirming care in South Australia, which is delivered by a multidisciplinary team, including psychiatrists, psychologists and mental health professionals, who conduct a specialised mental health assessment for every young person seeking medical affirmation before the commencement of any medical treatment.²

¹ Independent Review of Gender Identity Services for Children and Young People (The Cass Review): Final Report. April 2024. Available at <https://cass.independent-review.uk/home/publications/final-report/>.

² Women's and Children's Hospital, 2024, Gender Diversity Service, available at <https://www.wch.sa.gov.au/patients-visitors/adolescents/gender-diversity-adolescents>.

2. The risks of denying treatment to young people with gender dysphoria are significant. Access to gender affirming care is proven to be a major protective factor and safeguard against poor mental health and suicidality.³ ⁴ The Cass Review does not propose an alternative model to gender affirming care for gender diverse young people, nor what evidence exists to support any alternative model.
3. Medical experts state the Cass Review ignores key evidence and research. Dr Portia Predny, Vice President of The Australian Professional Association for Trans Health (AusPATH) stated “*The Cass review recommendations are at odds with the current evidence base, expert consensus and the majority of clinical guidelines around the world*”. Likewise, the Professional Association for Transgender Health Aotearoa (PATHA) states “*The evidence base in support of gender affirming care is clear, and we’re disappointed to see this review discard so much hard work from researchers around the world.*”⁵
4. An independent review into gender diversity services provided in South Australia would place transgender children and young people at further risk of harm. The Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP) has previously opposed such an inquiry on the basis that it “*would further harm vulnerable patients and their families through increased media and public attention*”,⁶ while the Australian Medical Association has released a position statement stating “*it condemns systemic discrimination, abuse and prejudice against young trans and gender diverse people seeking gender-affirming care*”.⁷ To progress an independent review would contradict the South Australian Government’s commitment to ‘*reduce distress that may contribute to suicide*’.⁸

We urge the government to oppose a review of gender diversity services in South Australia and listen to the trusted medical experts and voices of trans and gender diverse South Australians who are experts in their own care.

Kind regards,

Tamsin Anspach

Chair

South Australian Rainbow Advocacy Alliance

³ Australian Medical Association (AMA), 6 February 2024, ‘LGBTQIASB+ Health Position Statement’, p.9, available at <https://www.ama.com.au/articles/lgbtqiasb-health-position-statement>.

⁴ Hill AO, et. al. (2021) Writing Themselves In 4: The health and wellbeing of LGBTQA+ young people in Australia. Melbourne: Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, La Trobe University.

⁵ Equality Australia, 10 April 2024, ‘[Cass Review out-of-line with medical consensus and lacks relevance in Australian context](#)’.

⁶ Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP), 6 March 2020, ‘RACP statement on gender dysphoria’, available at <https://www.racp.edu.au/news-and-events/media-releases/racp-statement-on-gender-dysphoria/>.

⁷ Australian Medical Association (AMA), 6 February 2024, ‘LGBTQIASB+ Health Position Statement’, p.2, available at <https://www.ama.com.au/articles/lgbtqiasb-health-position-statement>.

⁸ Government of South Australia, ‘South Australian Suicide Prevention Plan 2023-2026’, available at <https://www.wellbeing.sa.gov.au/assets/downloads/Suicide-prevention/SA-Suicide-Prevention-Plan-2023-2026.pdf>.