



11 April 2024

By email

The Honourable Blair Boyer MP
Minister for Education, Training and Skills
Member for Wright

Dear Minister Boyer,

RE: The Education and Children's Services (Parental Primacy) Amendment Bill 2024

[SA Rainbow Advocacy Alliance \(SARAA\)](#) would like to express our concern and opposition to the Honourable Sarah Game MLC's proposed Education and Children's Services (Parental Primacy) Amendment Bill 2024 (Subdivision 2 and 3).

As the peak body on matters relating to the South Australian LGBTIQ+ community, we are providing you with our response to this and call on the government to firmly oppose the amendment to the Bill for the following reasons:

1. The proposed amendments are based on fundamental undermining of the Australian Curriculum and frameworks, implying that they are not based on rigorous evidence and expertise regarding inclusion, wellbeing and engagement principles.
2. The proposed Subdivisions suggest changes that would render gender diverse, intersex and sexually diverse students invisible, and their existence controversial. The repercussions of this would be catastrophic for individual students, their families and for the LGBTIQ+ community at large.
3. The Australian Curriculum is written in such a way that diversity, wellbeing and reflection of the world is embedded across the general capabilities, the learning content, and the 3 cross-curricula priorities. Seeking to remove or ban reference to gender diversity would require a fundamental reworking of the entirety of the Australian Curriculum and current school system, as the suggestion is at odds with the values enshrined throughout.
4. The proposed Subdivisions would be at odds with the Strategy for Public Education in South Australia¹, as well as policies and procedures relating to inclusion, engagement, diversity and wellbeing. Such policies are informed by federal and state anti-discrimination legislation and law. The proposed subdivisions are additionally at odds with SA Department for Education guidelines relating to equity and social inclusion.

¹ [hh \(education.sa.gov.au\)](https://www.education.sa.gov.au)

5. The proposals are counter to the position of most parents and caregivers regarding what is included in education.

Proposed subdivision 2: 82D – Gender fluidity and ideological education prohibited.

Subdivision 82D seeks to ban the inclusion of ‘gender fluidity education’ in either ‘Government or non-Government schools’.

The short and long-term impacts of proposed subdivision 82C will be two-fold:

- 1) Non-LGBTIQ+ students emerge from their education unaware of the full diversity of their world, lacking understanding and empathy about their peers, future colleagues, and the wider community. The broader potential impact of this is ongoing and increasing LGBTIQ+-phobia in our communities. Instances of violence and aggression towards LGBTIQ+ students and families may increase.
- 2) Gender-diverse students will experience isolation, invisibility and will lack education that includes and reflects them. The impact of this may be: reduced school attendance, internalised transphobia, increased experiences of discrimination and harassment at school, increased self-harm, substance abuse and suicide attempts.

Acknowledging and affirming all types of diversity is crucial to responding to the needs of all students. The strategy for public education in South Australia states that ‘Public education is for every child and young person in every community across our state’, and, that ‘preschools and schools...are safe, inclusive, and collaborative – a place where (every child and young person(’s) needs, interests, languages and cultures are recognised and supported².

The needs of ‘all students’ cannot be met if talking about their very existence is prohibited.

Subdivision 2: 82E – Ideological education prohibited.

Subdivision 82E seeks to introduce that education in a ‘Government school’ must ‘only consist of non-ideological instruction’.

It is not clear what is meant by this, but it can be assumed that this relates to matters regarding gender and sexual diversity, as well as relationships and sexual health education. To place prohibitions on the inclusion of topics and understanding in education settings is to do a disservice to young people. One of the three dimensions of the Australian Curriculum is General Capabilities, which includes areas such as; critical and creative thinking, ethical understanding, intercultural understanding, and personal and social capability.

To imply there is a universal idea of what is ‘ideological’ is extremely problematic and one that public education cannot purport to enforce. Our education system and curricula is built on best practice for student engagement and learning that includes a student’s right to belong, to see themselves reflected, to engage meaningfully, and to feel safe. If this cannot be in ways that are

² [hh \(education.sa.gov.au\)](http://education.sa.gov.au)

inclusive of, and references their gender, gender identity, sexuality, disability/ability, race, culture, appearance & religion, then student engagement, wellbeing and academic outcomes are negatively impacted.

The proposed subdivisions 82D and 82E are not reflective of the ideals of most parents. A recent (2022) study³ found that:

- 90% of parents wanted to see the curriculum address discrimination and bullying of gender and sexuality diverse people.
- 94% of parents want relationships and sexuality education in schools.
- 82% of parent respondents support (gender and sexual diversity) inclusion as part of the relationships and sexual health curriculum from kindergarten through to year 12.

LGBTIQA+ students have a right to education that makes their experience and existence visible, and allows them a fulfilling education and preparation for adult life. For many, home is not a place of support, which is why visibility and information is particularly crucial in education settings. We know that LGBTIQA+ students are statistically already some of the most at-risk in our community. Statistics show:

- 38% of LGBTIQA+ students missed days of school because they felt unsafe.⁴
- 71% of gender diverse young people aged 14 to 21 don't live at home with family⁵
- 80% of young people who have experienced abuse based on their sexuality reported that abuse occurring in schools.⁶
- 74% of trans young people have experienced bullying.

Soberingly, we know that 48% of transgender young Australians will attempt suicide by the age of 25⁷.

We urge the government to vote against this Bill and, in doing so, recognise the importance of our education system as being a place where all student diversities can be included and celebrated, fostering empathy and understanding throughout our community.

Kind regards,

Tamsin Anspach

Chair

South Australian Rainbow Advocacy Alliance

³ <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14681811.2021.1949975>

⁴ Writing Themselves In 4 – National Report, *Latrobe University* (February 2021) https://www.latrobe.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/1198945/Writing-Themselves-In-4-National-report.pdf

⁵ Snapshot Of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Statistics for LGBTIQ+ People, LGBTIQ+ Health Australia, 2021

⁶ Writing Themselves In 4 – National Report, *Latrobe University* (February 2021) https://www.latrobe.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/1198945/Writing-Themselves-In-4-National-report.pdf

⁷ <https://www.telethonkids.org.au/globalassets/media/documents/brain--behaviour/trans-pathways-summary.pdf>