

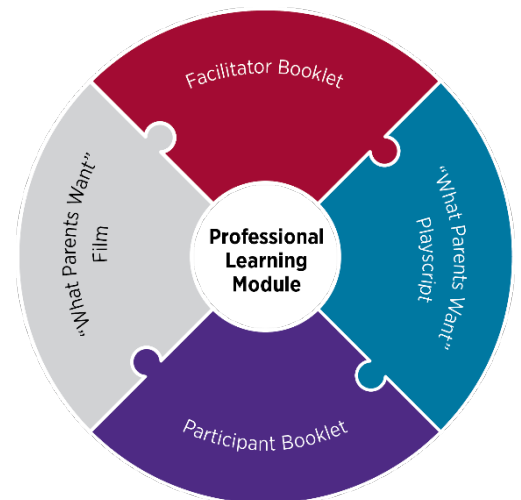
WHAT PARENTS WANT: TALKING ABOUT GENDER AND SEXUALITY DIVERSITY IN SCHOOLS

A Portfolio of Professional Learning Resources for Educators

Tania Ferfolja • Jacqueline Ullman

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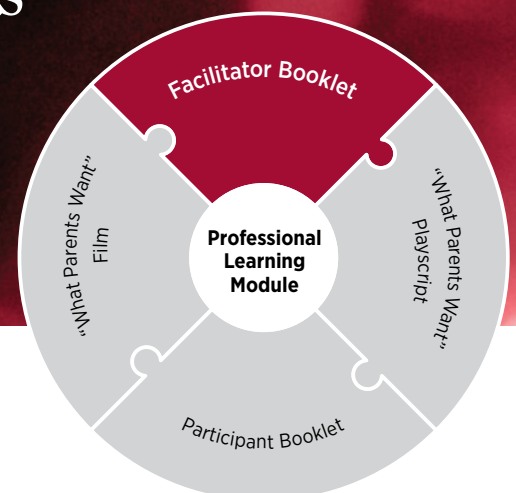
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WHAT PARENTS WANT:

Talking About Gender and Sexuality Diversity in Schools

A PROFESSIONAL LEARNING MODULE
FOR EDUCATORS

FACILITATOR BOOKLET



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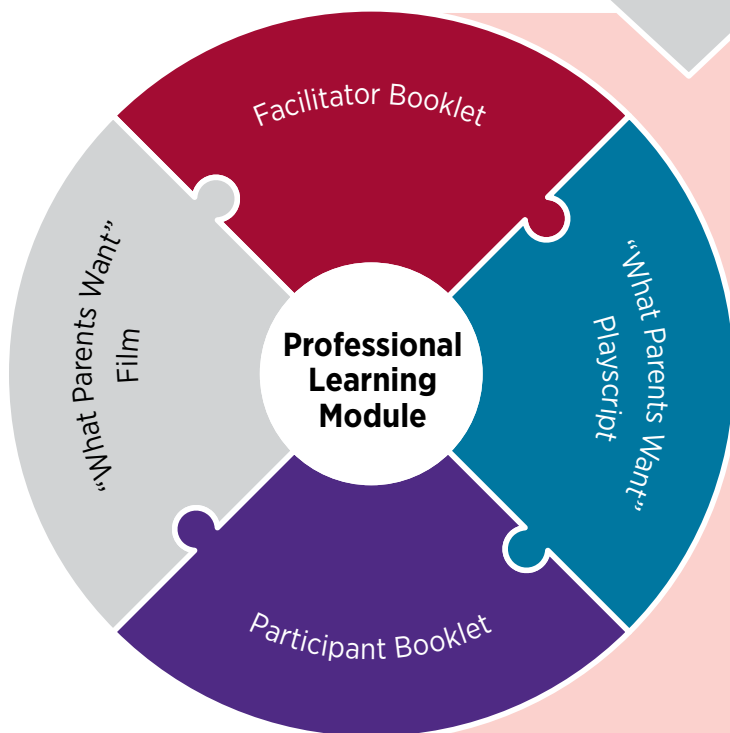
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This resource, like much of our work, is dedicated to all the gender and sexuality diverse young people who are trapped within systems that marginalise them, including schools, and to those we have lost in the struggle.

This Facilitator Booklet is one component of a professional learning module for educators and is part of a broader package of resources developed as a result of the findings of an Australian Research Council-funded project titled, ‘Gender and Sexuality Diversity in Schools. Parental Experiences and Schooling Responses’ (DP 180101676). The diagram below details the various components of the research on which this professional development model is based and on the structure of the professional development module itself. For more information about the research, professional development module, or to contact the researchers, visit: <https://westernsydney.edu.au/glds>.

Components of the Research:

- National Survey (Public School Parents)
- Interviews (Parents of GSD Students)
- Online Forum (Parents of GSD Students)
- Performed Ethnography



Resources available on the GLDS website alongside the Professional Learning Module:

- State “Snapshots” (Survey Results by State/Territory)
- Printable/post-able project data infographics
- Open-access, peer-reviewed academic publications
- Validated instrumentation to measure parents’ attitudes towards inclusivity (“PATII” Measure)
- GLDS Research Report

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all the parents who gave freely of their time to share their stories and perspectives about the inclusion of gender and sexuality diversity in schools for this research; without your support, the research and the associated resources, including this professional learning module, would not have been possible.

We would also like to thank the numerous primary and secondary school educators who gave up their evenings and weekends to participate in workshops in the development of this professional learning module and who provided constructive feedback. It is people like you who make a significant difference to the lives of gender and sexuality diverse (GSD) young people in schools.

Thanks to the research assistants who helped to produce this module. In particular, we would like to acknowledge the contributions of Sarah Oluk, who assisted with the early drafts of this module. Thanks also to Kate Manlik for her keen eye in providing editorial assistance and to Yunyin Xuan for her skilled desktop publishing.

Finally, we would like to acknowledge the Australian Research Council who funded the research, “Gender and Sexuality Diversity in Schools. Parental Experiences and Schooling Responses” (DP 180101676) on which this module is based.

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About this Professional Learning Module

This professional learning module has been written to accompany the film/playscript, *What Parents Want: Talking about Gender and Sexuality Diversity in Schools*. It is aimed at the professional learning of educators working in primary and/or secondary schools. It seeks to enhance educators' understandings about gender and sexuality diverse (GSD) young people and their experiences at school, and to generate discussion and action in terms of how educators can positively enhance the educational experience for these young people and their families.

Throughout this professional learning module and associated resources, we use the term *gender and sexuality diverse* (or GSD) as an inclusive term to describe the expansive diversity of gender identities and sexual orientations, without the need to name each of these. We use the acronym GSD (rather than gender and/or sexuality diverse) for the sake of simplicity; however, it is important to be aware that individuals may identify as both gender diverse and sexuality diverse or simply as one of these. The term GSD also mindfully includes individuals who may not wish to label themselves or align with a particular identity. This label is particularly useful when working with young people who may be aware that they are not heterosexual ("straight") or that their gender does not match the sex they were assigned at birth, but are unsure about how, or if, they wish to identify themselves beyond that.

The words used in the film/playscript are those used by parents verbatim as they shared their journey with their gender and sexuality diverse child at a particular point in time. A core value of this project was to validate and centre their voices.

It is critical to acknowledge that language used in this space, particularly around identity, is rapidly evolving. Thus, some of the language used by parents to describe their child's experience at the point of project participation has also evolved. As language can have a big impact on the well-being of gender and sexuality diverse people, all educators are encouraged to consult with local organisations who support gender and sexuality diversity to ensure that they are using the most appropriate terminology when working with young people and their families.

Despite changes in the legal and social landscape of Australia, many GSD young people still experience stigma and discrimination, particularly in schools. The intention of this professional learning module is to help educators understand the experiences of GSD students in order to provide safe and supportive environments for students' academic success and wellbeing.

This professional learning module is centred around three key goals: first, to raise educators' awareness about gender and sexuality diversity; second, to make space for this form of diversity in primary and secondary schools; and third, to ensure the wellbeing of all students. To achieve this, there are three parts to this professional learning module, which correspond to the three parts of the accompanying film/playscript:

- Part 1: This is Us. Introducing our Children.
- Part 2: School Encounters. Parents Talk about their Child's School Experiences.
- Part 3: Ways Forward. Parents Talk about what Schools can do.

Throughout this professional learning module, there are Facilitator's notes to explain the context as well as the provision of information to help raise awareness and support for the wellbeing of GSD children and young people in schools.

Research Project Background

This professional learning module has been developed from a nationally representative research study conducted across Australia. There were two major components to the research: the first, was a comprehensive survey of parents (N = 2,093) of children in primary and secondary public schooling which sought parents' perspectives about the inclusion of gender and sexuality diversity-related curriculum in school education. Nationally representative findings from this part of the study are available on our project website:

<https://westernsydney.edu.au/glds/outcomes-publications>.

In addition to providing the first nationally representative data detailing what Australian public-school parents want with respect to the inclusion of gender and sexuality diversity in the curriculum, the survey also asked about the prevalence of GSD children in their households. Findings highlighted that GSD children come from a diverse range of families, including families living in cities, regional and remote areas of Australia; families where parents were born in Europe, Asia, Africa and the Americas and speak a variety of different languages at home; families where parents identify as Christian, Hindu, Buddhist, Jewish, Muslim and as not religious.

An additional element of the research project involved interviews with, and an online forum for, parents of GSD children. This element explored parents' experiences of navigating the schooling system with/for their GSD child. This group of participating parents mostly identified as mothers and it is their voices that form the basis of the film, the associated playscript, and the stimulus resources within this accompanying professional learning module. Additionally, to support educators in their understandings about what parents want in schools, relevant details from the nationally representative survey findings are included in this resource.

Performed Ethnography

The film/playscript that accompanies this professional learning module is based on a performed ethnography script. Performed ethnography uses the voices of research participants in the form of quotes and excerpts, which are woven together to create a verbatim playscript. In Parts 1 and 2 of the film, professional actors have taken on the voices of six interviewees. In Part 3, the researchers have amalgamated some of the data from other participants from both the interviews and forum into the voices of these six characters to form 'composite' characters. We have made these adaptations so that the many ideas for school inclusion as expressed by parents in the research more broadly could be incorporated into the film/playscript and this professional learning module.

Why is this Professional Learning Module important?

There are few professional learning modules available in Australia that directly aim to help educators support GSD students and their families in schools; however, there is considerable Australian research that illustrates why raising educators' awareness is critical for the safety, wellbeing and academic development of GSD young people. The existing Australian research in this area provides an opportunity for educators to reflect on the experiences of GSD students and raises awareness of the possible recommendations and provisions that encourage inclusivity in education settings.

Australian Student Wellbeing Framework

All Australian schools are expected to be familiar with and adhere to the Australian Student Wellbeing Framework. The Framework was developed using research evidence demonstrating the strong connection between students' safety, their wellbeing and, ultimately, their learning (see <https://studentwellbeinghub.edu.au/educators/framework/>).

One of the five principles of the Framework is "Inclusion", or the creation of an "inclusive and connected school culture" that "values diversity, and fosters positive, respectful relationships." You can read more about how educators can support inclusion using the Framework here: <https://studentwellbeinghub.edu.au/educators/framework/>.

The Framework validates the need for educators' awareness-raising on the topic of gender and sexuality diversity in order to support the wellbeing of GSD students.

AUSTRALIAN STUDENT WELLBEING FRAMEWORK

The **Australian Student Wellbeing Framework** supports Australian schools to provide every student with the strongest foundation possible for them to reach their aspirations in learning and in life.

The vision of the Framework is that Australian schools are learning communities that promote student wellbeing, safety and positive relationships so that students can reach their full potential.

The Framework is based on evidence that demonstrates the strong association between safety, wellbeing and learning.



Source: <https://studentwellbeinghub.edu.au/educators/framework/>

Educator Duty of Care

Educators and schooling institutions have a duty of care to students, which includes the protection of students' mental health and the prevention of discrimination and harassment. While the language used to articulate this varies somewhat across Australian states and territories, the general essence is the same: a directive for educators to provide safe and supportive schooling environments for all students in their care. More information and links to relevant legal documents, guidance and legislation across states and territories can be found here: <http://www.aussieeducator.org.au/education/dutyofcare.html>

Legal Expectations for Public School Educators

It is unlawful to discriminate on the basis of a number of protected attributes in certain areas of public life, including education and employment; these protected attributes include, but are not limited to, sex, intersex status, gender identity and sexual orientation. (See <https://www.ag.gov.au/rights-and-protections/human-rights-and-anti-discrimination/australias-anti-discrimination-law>.)

There are also Australian government guidelines which recognise sex and gender. These acknowledge that individuals may identify as “a gender other than the sex they were assigned at birth, or may not identify as exclusively male or female”. See the following site for more information about Australian Government guidelines on the recognition of sex and gender: <https://www.ag.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-03/AustralianGovernmentGuidelinesontheRecognitionofSexandGender.pdf>.

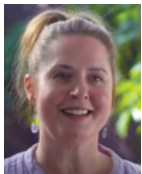
The Real Story: About the Film/Playscript

The parents whose voices are used in this film and the playscript are from real families from across Australia. They volunteered to participate in this research because they affirmed their child's gender and sexuality diversity and they wanted to have an opportunity to share their and their child's experiences with educators.

In this film/playscript, parents are identified by the name of their child (e.g. "Mother of Asha") and all names used are pseudonyms. Additionally, in the film, actors are playing the parts of the parents.

It is essential to note that not all parents of GSD students are supportive of their child's gender and/or sexuality diversity and some home situations for GSD young people are hostile. Schools may be the only place where GSD young people can be affirmed; this is one reason why it is critical for educators to know about gender and sexuality diversity and to understand the importance of supporting these areas of diversity within their school communities.

While watching the film or reading the playscript, you will meet:



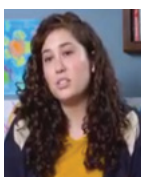
Shondelle Pratt as:
Mother of Asha (bisexual son)



Anna Cheney as:
Mother of River (gender fluid child)



Caritta Gronroos as:
Mother of Emma (transgender daughter)



Tricia Morosin as:
Mother of Meg (transgender daughter)



Tsu Shan Chambers as:
Mother of Bridget (transgender daughter)



Suz Mawer as:
Mother of Jordie (sexuality diverse daughter)

Module Overview

What Parents Want: Talking About Gender and Sexuality Diversity in Schools is divided into three parts.

Part 1: This is Us. Introducing our Children

Part 1 introduces the audience to six parent participants who talk about their child's experiences of coming out and identifying as gender and/or sexuality diverse (GSD). You'll notice the parents in this section all identify as mothers; most of the people who participated in the research interviews and online forum were mothers. Part 1 will help viewers/readers understand a little about these young people and their histories before hearing about their stories of schooling as described by their parent.

Part 2: School Encounters. Parents Talk about their Child's School Experiences

Part 2 shares parents' experiences of the school system in relation to their GSD child. In Part 2, we hear again from the same six parents from Part 1 who talk about their child's interactions with their peers and educators. We learn about what schools are doing well and what schools could do better in supporting GSD students.

Part 3: Ways Forward. Parents Talk about what Schools can do

Part 3 focuses on parents' ideas about what schools can do to support their child and other GSD young people into the future. The voices that you hear in this part are an amalgamation of voices from participants across the research

Recommendations for Delivery

This professional learning module offers two potential delivery options. Both enable engagement with the voices of parents. Participants can either view a 45-minute film, *What Parents Want: Talking about Gender and Sexuality Diversity in Schools* which is in three parts, or participants can read aloud, as a group, the playscript on which the film is based.

- For a larger group, it is recommended that the film is shown (in its three parts).
- For a group of 20 participants or less, either the film or the playscript would be suitable for use. In the case of the latter approach, participants should be asked to volunteer to read a character's lines from the playscript while others listen. Reading the playscript on which the film is based provides a more interactive experience.

Irrespective of which method is used, this professional learning module includes activities and discussion prompts that can be used with both methods of delivery. These activities include whole and small group discussions as well as individual reflection opportunities.

It is strongly recommended that the group views, or reads, each part of the film/playscript in order. At the conclusion of each part, participants are directed to undertake associated activities to assist learning and reflection.

The following outlines the duration of each section of the film/playscript.¹

- Part 1. This is Us. Introducing our Children (Film duration: 12 minutes).
- Part 2. School Encounters. Parents Talk about their Child's School Experiences (Film duration: 24 minutes).
- Part 3. Ways Forward. Parents Talk about what Schools can do (Film duration: 14 minutes).

It will take approximately 3 hours to complete this professional learning module. It is recommended that the module is undertaken in two 1.5-hour sessions with a short break in between (e.g., morning tea). That is:

- Session 1 (1.5 hours): Part 1 and Part 2.
- Session 2 (1.5 hours): Part 3.

What's in the package?

As seen on page iv, the Facilitator Booklet is part of a larger package of materials which support professional learning about gender and sexuality diversity.

This Facilitator Booklet includes the following resources that will help with the implementation of this professional learning module:

- Facilitator Guidelines, including links to the online film/playscript resources;
- Participant Worksheets, which will support activities as outlined in this module;
- Evaluation Form, to provide the Facilitator with feedback which can guide schools' additional actions/goals in this area of student wellbeing;
- Participants' *Certificate of Completion* proforma, for copying and distributing to participants after they have undertaken the professional learning module.

¹ A group reading of the playscript may take slightly longer than viewing the film because of the nature of the activity.

In addition, the Facilitator Booklet is accompanied by a Participant Booklet. The Participant Booklet includes information about gender and sexuality diversity in schools. This will be a useful resource for participants but should only be given to participants **after** they have completed the module.

Before You Begin

Prior to facilitating this professional learning experience with colleagues, please view the full-length version of the film *What Parents Want: Talking about Gender and Sexuality Diversity in Schools* and/or read the playscript in full. It is also recommended that Facilitators read through the instructions that follow and familiarise themselves with the module activities prior to commencement.

Facilitation of activities associated with Part 3 of the film/playscript requires additional preparation. Facilitators will need to familiarise themselves with the available policies in their state/territory, relevant to their schooling sector, which address the inclusion of gender and sexuality diversity and/or accommodations to be provided to this cohort of students. A partial list of these is available on pages 55–61 of this resource. Facilitators should also familiarise themselves with the relevant policies within the school at which they are presenting (e.g. wellbeing; harassment/bullying; uniform; school conduct; etc.).

Throughout the module, suggestions have been made in relation to the group size for various activities. As the number of participants may vary, these suggestions should be taken as indicative. With larger groups, multiple facilitators may be preferred to help manage the group. Using multiple facilitators can also provide additional support and someone on which to bounce off ideas. Alternatively, big groups could be divided into smaller groups where the module is implemented simultaneously across several rooms.

What you will need:

You will need the following tools to implement this module:

- Access to and the means to screen the film *What Parents Want: Talking about Gender and Sexuality Diversity in Schools*
- Both the full-length film and its various parts (three) can be found on the project YouTube Channel: <https://www.youtube.com/@genderandsexualitydiversit2500/featured>

OR

- Copies of the playscript *What Parents Want: Talking about Gender and Sexuality Diversity in Schools*, duplicated or made electronically available to participants
- The playscript can be found on the “Educator Resources” page of the project website at: https://westernsydney.edu.au/gsd/educator_resources

AND

- Facilitator Booklet
- Copies of the Participant’s Worksheets, duplicated to physically distribute to participants
- Facilitator Resources
 - Quote Cards
 - Theme Cards

NOTE: Sufficient physical copies of the Quote Cards (see pages 48–50) and Theme Cards should be made to distribute to groups (see pages 51–54).

- Whiteboard/whiteboard markers
- Copies of the Evaluation
- Copies of the *Certificate of Completion*
- Copies of the Participant Booklet, duplicated or made electronically available to participants **after** they have completed the module;
- The Participant Booklet can be found on the “Educator Resources” page of the project website at: https://westernsydney.edu.au/gsd/educator_resources.

Please Note:

The directions within the module are suggestions only and users should use their judgement about the best way to tailor these materials to the participant group, which is different in each case.

Facilitators should be aware of the preparatory work required to successfully implement this module.

The “Participant Booklet” should be distributed to participants after they have completed the professional learning module.

Participant worksheets should be copied and distributed to the participants by the Facilitator for use during the workshop.

Need Extra Support?

For additional support in relation to this professional learning module, please contact the researchers via email at: <https://westernsydney.edu.au/gsd/about/contact-us>.

The researchers may be able to assist with the facilitation of the module and/or provision of bespoke professional learning workshops in relation to gender and sexuality diversity for staff. Please contact us to discuss your needs and for a quote.

Group online training of Facilitators will be held several times throughout the year. Please see the website for more information about dates, times, and costs.

Glossary of Terms

The following terms are useful for educators to know and have been provided for your information. Most of these terms have been used by the parents in the film/playscript and are in general circulation.

androgynous	Describes people who may not have distinctly masculine or feminine characteristics or who may display a combination of both masculine and feminine characteristics.
bisexual	Describes people who have sexual and/or romantic attraction to more than one gender. (See also pansexual.)**
came out/come out	We live in a world where heterosexuality and rigid gender norms are not only expected, but also presumed. The term “coming out” usually refers to the process by which a person’s sexual identity is disclosed to others. The term also refers to people sharing their gender identity or gender history.**
cisgender	Individuals whose personal gender identity matches their sex assigned at birth.
gay	Describes people who have the romantic and sexual capacity primarily for people of the same sex or gender, i.e. same-sex attracted. Historically the term “gay” has been used more for men in Australia but sometimes includes women.**
gender confirmation surgery	Gender confirmation surgery (also known as “gender affirmation surgery”) refers to procedures that help people transition to their self-identified gender. It is important to note that not all gender diverse people (see definition below) will want to have gender confirmation surgery and may transition in other ways. Gender confirmation surgery is not available to young people under the age of 18 in Australia. These young people may elect to take other, medically assisted and approved, approaches to assist their gender affirmation, including hormone therapy. What is possible for young people, with respect to the forms of these approaches and the various legal requirements, differs by state/territory.
gender diversity/diverse	Individuals whose gender identities/expressions do not align with the sex they were assigned at birth.
gender dysphoria	A diagnosis of “gender dysphoria” may be used in the fields of medicine and psychology to explain feelings of distress or discomfort that may be experienced by an individual when their gender identity does not align with their biological sex. It is important to note that not all gender diverse and/or transgender individuals experience these feelings of distress or discomfort. Gender dysphoria has been superseded by the term “gender incongruence”.
gender fluid	Describes people who do not identify themselves as having a fixed gender identity.
gender identity	A person’s deeply felt sense of who they are, whether a woman, a man, both, neither, or something else.**

gender non-conforming	Behaviour or expression of an individual that does not align with traditional, binary gender norms.
gender non-binary	Individuals who do not identify within the male/female, or masculine/feminine gender binary.
gender-queer	Describes people who do not subscribe to conventional gender distinctions but identify with neither, both, or a combination of the gender identities of man or woman or masculine or feminine.
heteronormativity	The construction of heterosexuality as the only natural, normal and superior sexuality, wherein all other forms of sexuality are positioned as deviant and abnormal. Heteronormativity includes the practices, policies and perspectives that privilege heterosexuality and position this form of sexuality as the normative standard.
lesbian	Describes women who are same-sex or gender attracted. Some non-binary individuals also use the term “lesbian” to describe their sexuality.
microaggression	Describes a statement, action, or incident regarded as an instance of indirect, subtle, or unintentional discrimination against members of a marginalised group such as GSD individuals.
misgender/ misgendering	An occurrence where a person is described or addressed using language that does not match their gender identity (National LGBT Health Alliance, 2013b). This can include the incorrect use of pronouns (she/he/they), familial titles (father, sister, uncle) and, at times, other words that traditionally have gendered applications (pretty, handsome, etc.). It is best to ask the person, at a relevant moment, which pronouns they use.**
pansexual	Describes people who are sexually and/or romantically attracted to people across all the spectrums of sex and gender, and where sex and gender are irrelevant in the attraction. The term “pan” means “all”. (See also bisexual.)**
pronouns	Pronouns are the terms people use to indicate others’ gender identities when speaking or writing about them (e.g. he/she/they, his/hers/theirs, etc.).
sexuality diverse	Sexuality diverse can be used as an inclusive term to describe people who do not identify as heterosexual.
trans*/transgender	An individual whose gender identities/expressions do not align with the sex they were assigned at birth.
transition/ transitioning	The personal process or processes a trans or gender-diverse person undertakes in recognising, accepting, and expressing their gender identity, including social, legal and/or medical aspects. It might include changes to appearance (clothing, hairstyle, etc.), and/or asking people to use a different name and pronoun (he/she/they, his/hers/theirs, etc.). It can often include the use of hormones and in some cases gender affirmation surgery.**

**These definitions are reproduced with permission from the “GSA Connect” resources developed by Twenty10, NSW Teachers Federation and Wear It Purple.
<https://www.gsaconnect.org.au/about/>.

Inclusive Language Guide²

When working with other people, whether they are students, staff or parents/community members, it is critical to use inclusive and respectful language. Inclusive language should be used for personal communications, as well as in written documentation such as policies, programs, curricula and educational resources. Using inclusive language increases feelings of trust, safety and belonging and is a way to address the prejudice and discrimination that GSD people, including young people in schools, encounter.

Inclusive language recognises that bodies, genders, relationships and sexualities are diverse, and these aspects of identity may be expressed in different ways. Inclusive language should be used even when referring to someone who is not physically present as this is respectful of them and acknowledges the diversity present within every school.

The information below provides the basics for understanding inclusive language used to describe gender and sexuality diversity. For the sake of brevity, only key points are included below. More information can be found online on numerous government/education department websites (such as <https://www.vic.gov.au/inclusive-language-guide#what-are-the-basics>) or by engaging with local organisations who support gender and sexuality diversity.

What are the basics?

- Language in the area of gender and sexuality diversity is evolving and can be different across cultures and generations.
- The term “queer” may be seen as offensive by some older GSD people, whereas some younger people have reclaimed this term to define themselves.
- Where some transgender people or their family members describe the experience of being trans as being “born in the wrong body”, others may view this language as problematic, and refer to “presumptions” or “assumptions” about gender at birth, preferring not to label the body as “right” or “wrong”.
- Terms may also become outdated. For instance, the term “gender dysphoria” has been superseded by “gender incongruence”.
- Some people can feel overwhelmed by evolving language; do your best to be inclusive and if you make a mistake, apologise and move on.
- Do not assume a person is heterosexual or that they are in a heterosexual relationship. Use words such as “partner”, rather than “wife”/“husband”/“boyfriend” etc.
- Families are varied and complex. Do not assume your students live in a “nuclear” family or make assumptions about your students’ caregivers. Use terms such as “parent” or “carer”. It is best to ask your students about how they refer to their family composition and the language they use if you’re unsure.

² Adapted from <https://www.vic.gov.au/inclusive-language-guide#what-are-the-basics>.

- Be aware of the differences between gender, sex and sexuality. **Gender** is a part of how you see yourself and how you interact with others. Not everybody sees themselves as male or female and may understand their gender as a combination or neither of these. **Sex** refers to a person's biological sex characteristics and natural variations to sex characteristics are not uncommon. **Sexuality** refers to a person's romantic and/or sexual attraction to other people. Gender and sexuality diversity isn't a choice or preference – it is just how people are. (See the “Glossary of Terms” earlier in this booklet for the definitions of other terms used by parents in this research).
- Be guided by the individual. Do not assume a GSD individual wants to be or should be ‘out’ – that is – known as gender and/or sexuality diverse to others.
- As an educator, support for young people can be provided by using the pronouns they employ. Be open and make a space for students to share their pronouns with you, particularly if these have shifted for them or do not match school records. In general, if you need to know what pronoun a person uses, ask them respectfully what pronoun they *use* (not what pronoun they *prefer* – which suggests a choice and may be offensive).

Trigger Warning

Some of the parents' narratives refer to children's self-harm, suicide ideation, and experiences of discrimination. At times, the film/playscript contains stories that some viewers/readers may find difficult. Support is available Australia-wide through Employment Assistant Program Schemes, Lifeline (ph. 13 11 14), or QLife LGBTIQ+ (ph. 1800 184 527).

Frequently Asked Questions

The following list of frequently asked questions is designed to help Facilitators respond to participant queries which may be raised during the implementation of this professional learning module.

Why do educators need to understand gender and sexuality diversity?

As outlined earlier, identifying as GSD is protected by several Federal and State laws including the Federal Anti-Discrimination Act. Educators have a duty of care to all students and their families. Thus, it is critical that educators are well-informed about the experiences of GSD young people and their families to ensure that they have access to a full and inclusive education that meets their needs, including a curriculum that reflects their lives and is of relevance to them. Students' learning is enhanced when their educators understand their needs and identities.

All young people have a right to be educated.

The challenges faced by GSD students can be immense. Research shows that there are negative social, emotional, and educational implications for GSD young people, particularly for those students who are unsupported. For some GSD children and youth, schools are the only potentially supportive spaces for them if they have been rejected by parents/family. Not all parents of GSD young people are supportive, and it is not uncommon for GSD young people to experience homelessness, family rejection and/or family violence. Students' wellbeing is linked to their engagement with school; accordingly, educators are in an ideal position to provide essential support and safe spaces for GSD children and young people.

Population-level research has shown that a significant number of Australians report same gender attraction and behaviour, including roughly 9% of men and 19% of women.² Approximately 1% of the adult population identifies as transgender.³ Prevalence data for Australian young people is estimated to be higher, with the most recent large-scale survey of Australian teens showing 2.3% identifying as transgender or gender diverse, and roughly 1 in 4 identifying as either (1) gay or lesbian (4.7%); (2) bisexual (16.4%); or (3) not sure about their sexual orientation (5.2%).⁴

Despite the changing demographics of our society, gender and sexuality diversity is largely invisible in Australian schools and silenced in policy, curricula, pedagogy, and practice. Moreover, some school cultures are openly hostile towards students who identify as GSD. These realities can make schools unwelcoming places for GSD students, or those who are perceived to be GSD by others. Discrimination can result in myriad problems for young people's safety, educational engagement, and wellbeing.^{5,6} It is mandatory for all young people to attend school; thus, it is critical that educators understand their role in ensuring GSD students' time at school is supportive and affirming. This need is compounded by the fact that some parents are not supportive of gender and sexuality diversity. This means that some young people live in environments where their identity is not accepted or where they may be subject to overt physical and emotional hostility from parents, family members and friends.

3 A summary of the population-level data on the prevalence of GSD individuals comes from the "Research Matters" fact sheet created by Rainbow Health Victoria (2020), available here: <https://www.rainbowhealthvic.org.au/media/pages/research-resources/research-matters-how-many-people-are-lgbtqi/4170611962-1612761890/researchmatters-numbers-lgbtqi.pdf>.

4 The most current national survey of Australian secondary students ($N = 6327$) was published by La Trobe in 2019 and is available here: https://www.latrobe.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/1031899/National-Survey-of-Secondary-Students-and-Sexual-Health-2018.pdf.

5 The Public Health Association's 2022 policy position statement on comprehensive relationships and sexuality education links to the most current research from the field on the experiences of GSD students in Australian schools, available here: <https://www.phaa.net.au/documents/item/5635>.

6 *The Free2Be...Yet?* (Ullman, 2021) national survey of GSD high school students is the largest Australian survey of this cohort ($N = 2367$) and highlights the relationship between a discriminatory schooling environment and poorer school wellbeing outcomes, including lowered educational aspirations. The full report is available here: <https://healtheducationresources.unesco.org/library/documents/free2be-yet-second-national-study-australian-high-school-students-who-identify>.

Why are we doing this when no students in our school identify as GSD?

In lieu of representative, population-level data on the prevalence of GSD school-aged children and young people in Australia, multiple sources of research offer usable estimates. Recent research found that 1 in 4 Australian high school students sampled identified their sexual orientation as other than heterosexual; and 1 in 45 identified as gender diverse.³ Educators do not necessarily know who these students are; young people often do not disclose these aspects of their identity. It is important for educators in primary and secondary schools to know that they are likely to have GSD students in their classes. Just because an aspect of an individual's identity may not be outwardly visible, it does not mean that it is any less impactful on their life or their sense of self.

Additionally, young people need to be prepared for the world in which they are living. The advent of marriage equality in 2017 means that same-sex attraction is visible and important to understand. This reality is compounded in popular culture and social media where gender and sexuality diversity are frequently acknowledged. There has been increasing legal and social recognition of GSD people in Australia, particularly over the last decade or two, during which time many laws have been modified to be more inclusive of these forms of diversity.

What if parents don't approve of the mention or affirmation of gender and sexuality diversity in schools?

This professional learning module is aimed at developing educators' understandings and awareness of gender and sexuality diversity in schools so that they can support GSD young people as part of their duty of care. Educators often assume parents are resistant to gender and sexuality diversity in schools; however, this assumption is not based in research. Our nationally representative Australian research examining public school parents' perceptions of the inclusion/exclusion of gender and sexuality diversity in schools found that, on average, 82% of parents wanted to see gender and sexuality diversity introduced across the primary and secondary school curriculum in an age-appropriate way.^{7,8} If, while supporting the wellbeing of GSD students, educators receive negative feedback or commentary from parents, this should be referred to school leadership personnel who will be very familiar with the federal Australian Wellbeing Framework's directives for inclusivity of diversity and educators' legal responsibilities with respect to the prevention of discrimination and harassment of students.

7 While the Gender and Sexuality Diversity in Schools (GSDS) project website links to all publications and other resources associated with this Australian Research Council-funded national project, the published paper which overviews results from the national survey (Ullman et al., 2021) is available here: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14681811.2021.1949975>.

8 The full GSDS project report which outlines findings from across the five phases of research (Ferfolja et al., 2023) is available here: <https://westernsydney.edu.au/gsd/outcomes-publications>.

Aren't primary school children too young to know about their gender identity?

According to the Royal Children's Hospital in Melbourne, about 1.2% of Australian school children are thought to identify as transgender.⁹ Transgender and gender diverse children tend to first express their gender identity – through things like preferences for toys, clothing and interests – at the same time as all other children, around two or three years old. As is illustrated in Part 2 of the film and playscript, it is not uncommon for gender diverse and transgender children to want to express their gender and have their gender be affirmed by others during the primary school years or earlier.

Likewise, 2018 research based in the United States, which surveyed a representative sample of 9- and 10-year-olds and their parents, found that 0.4% of children aged 9 and 10 self-identified as transgender; 1.2% of the parents surveyed indicated that their child might identify as transgender.¹⁰ Even using these more conservative statistics, a primary school of 400 students, for example, may have one or two gender diverse or transgender students in any given year.

How prevalent is self-harming in children and young people?

A 2020 longitudinal survey of primary school students from a stratified random sample of 43 primary schools in Victoria found that 2.6% of children aged 11 and 12 years old reported self-harm behaviours.¹¹ Further, this research showed that experiencing difficulties with peer relationships earlier in primary school was strongly associated with self-harm behaviours in late primary school (with 11- and 12-year-olds).

As outlined in LGBTIQ+ Health Australia's 2021 *Snapshot of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Statistics for LGBTIQ+ People*, compared to the general population, GSD young people are over four times as likely to engage in self-harm behaviours.¹² 2021 Australian national research indicated that 77% of their sample of gender diverse and transgender young people, aged 14 to 21 years old, had engaged in self-harm behaviours in their lifetime.¹³

The remainder of this document deals with the practical implementation of the professional learning module with school staff.

9 The Royal Children's Hospital in Melbourne produces a number of fact sheets, including the following on gender dysphoria: https://www.rch.org.au/kidsinfo/fact_sheets/Gender_dysphoria/#:-:text=About%201.2%20per%20cent%20of,natural%20spectrum%20of%20human%20diversity.

10 This finding from a representative cohort investigating adolescent brain cognitive development (Calzo & Blashill, 2018) is available here: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6584307/>.

11 This Australian National Health and Medical Research Council-funded cohort study (Borschmann et al., 2020) assessed $N = 1239$ children annually from ages 8-9 to ages 11-12. The full findings are available here: <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0242802>.

12 LGBTIQ+ Health Australia has produced a "snapshot" document (2021) of research on mental health and suicide prevention statistics for this cohort, available here: https://assets.nationbuilder.com/lgbtihealth/pages/549/attachments/original/1648014801/24.10.21_Snapshot_of_MHSP_Statistics_for_LGBTIQ_People_-_Revised.pdf?1648014801.

13 The Writing Themselves In 4 (Hill et al., 2021) report outlines the experiences of GSD young people, aged 14-21 years old, and is available here: https://www.latrobe.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/1198945/Writing-Themselves-In-4-National-report.pdf.

Part 1. This is Us. Introducing our Children



Step 1: Facilitator introduces Part 1 of the module

Action: Facilitator reads or paraphrases the following information to participants.

“This professional learning module seeks to familiarise participants about the experiences of GSD young people attending primary and secondary public schools across Australia. It draws on an Australian national research study where parents of GSD children shared their experiences of navigating the school system with and for their child. What the parents said in interviews and posts in an online forum was used by the researchers to develop a playscript and subsequent film entitled, *What Parents Want: Talking about Gender and Sexuality Diversity in Schools*. The words that are expressed in the film/playscript are thus the words and experiences of real parents.

This research also included a survey component which resulted in nationally representative findings about the attitudes of Australian public-school parents towards gender and sexuality diversity-inclusive curriculum. Results from this research will be interspersed throughout this module. Notably, over 80% of parents want gender and sexuality diversity included in primary and secondary public-school education, delivered in age-appropriate ways.¹⁴ Interviews and forum contributions with parents of GSD young people found that these parents wanted greater inclusion, visibility, and education around these topics for the wellbeing of their child. The film/playscript centres on their experiences.”

¹⁴ This link provides access to an easy-reading synopsis of the survey findings from the GSDS project, published in The Conversation: <https://theconversation.com/4-out-of-5-parents-support-teaching-gender-and-sexuality-diversity-in-australian-schools-176787>.

“This professional learning module involves watching the film or reading the playscript as a group and undertaking a series of activities which will promote critical thinking about the experiences of GSD young people who we teach, knowingly or unknowingly. The focus of this work is on how, as educators, we can improve our educational practices for these young people and their families, both within our classrooms and the broader school environment.

Before beginning, it’s important to know that this professional learning module is aimed at supporting educators in their understandings of GSD young people and their school experiences. At times, the film/playscript, which is central to this workshop, contains stories that some participants may find difficult. Support is available Australia-wide through Employment Assistant Program Schemes, Lifeline (ph. 13 11 14), or QLife LGBTIQ+ (ph. 1800 184 527).”

Step 2: Let’s begin! – Distribution of materials

Action: Facilitator reads or paraphrases the following information to participants.

“The film/playscript is divided into three parts. Part 1 is called *This is Us. Introducing our Children*. In this section of the film/playscript, six parents, all mothers, introduce their child and talk a little about the experiences that their child has had coming out to them or to others as GSD. After watching/reading Part 1, some activities will be undertaken to help unpack, explore, and understand these young people and their parents. To do these activities, participants should use Worksheet 1 to respond to stimulus questions while viewing the film. These notes will help participants to contribute to the discussion questions after viewing Part 1.”

Action: Facilitator distributes Worksheet 1 to participants. Worksheet 1 contains a series of questions for participants to scaffold Steps 3 and 4.

Action: Participants view Part 1 of the film, “This is us. Introducing our Children” or engage in a group reading of Part 1 of the playscript.

Step 3: Whole group discussion

After screening/reading Part 1 of the film/playscript, the Facilitator asks participants the following questions to stimulate thought and discussion. Participants can use their responses from Worksheet 1 to help to contribute their ideas to the broader group discussion.

Action: Facilitator asks participants the following questions, one at a time, and discusses the responses to each question before moving to the next question. More than one participant may respond. The idea is to get participants engaged in the film/playscript and the experiences of the characters.

- “Whose story resonated with you most from Part 1? Why?”
- “Was there anything that surprised you? What? Why?”
- “Asha’s mother said that ‘heterosexuality hasn’t been assumed as much in his entire schooling life as it certainly was for any of our generation’. What does this say about the changing experiences of young people?”
- Jot down some of the experiences from Part 1 where emotions were spoken of or alluded to by the parents in relation to themselves or their child/ren. Include what the context was and how it made the parent/child feel.

Facilitator's note: Possible emotions could include, but are not limited to: resistance; embarrassment; surprise; pride; confidence; connection (to the school community); curiosity (about physical changes); concern; anxiety; overwhelm; insecurity (about their body); fear; (hyper)vigilance; optimism, etc. Participants should identify in which situation or under what conditions these emotions emerged.

Action: *Facilitator reads or paraphrases the following information to participants*

“Clearly, the experiences that we heard about in Part 1 from the parents differed across schools. We also heard that their child’s ‘coming out’ was an emotional and, at times, challenging experience, both for the young person and their parents. As educators we need to consider how these experiences add another layer of complexity to the lives of GSD students and their families that is not necessarily experienced in the same ways by others.”

Step 4: Small group discussion

Action: *Facilitator reads or paraphrases the following information to participants*

“Recall in the film/playscript how some parents talked about how the school made accommodations to support their child at school. These accommodations included relatively small changes through to more significant adjustments. Some of the main accommodations for students/their families included:

- Helping with the social transitioning of the child;
- Reviewing classroom practices;
- Rethinking gender assumptions;
- Changing pronoun use;
- Making accommodations related to toilets and changeroom facilities;
- Making accommodations related to the school uniform; and,
- Increasing visibility of gender and sexuality diversity in the school environment.”

Action: *The Facilitator splits participants into small groups of no more than four and advises participants that each small group will need to select a scribe and reporter who will report back to the larger group the key points raised in the discussion.*

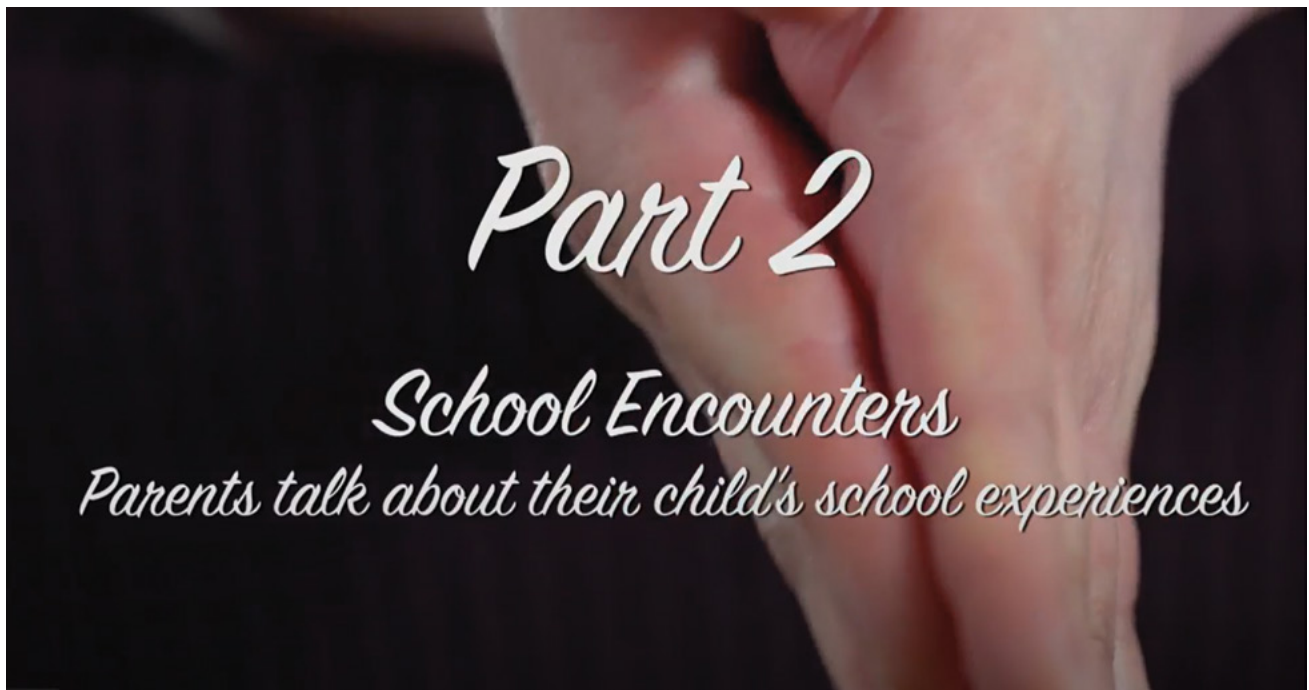
Action: *The Facilitator reads or paraphrases the following information to participants.*

“Consider the accommodations that I just mentioned; these are listed on Worksheet 1. Think about them in relation to our own school context. As a group discuss these accommodations in light of the questions which are also on Worksheet 1. These are:

- What kinds of accommodations has our school made or could our school make?
- What might be the challenges associated with any of these? How might these be overcome?
- How can the whole school be involved in any of these accommodations?”

Action: *After reporting back from the small group discussion, the Facilitator asks participants to share their key takeaways or what they have learnt from Part 1. Not all participants are required to share, and how many share is left up to the discretion of the Facilitator.*

Part 2. School Encounters. Parents Talk about their Child's School Experiences



Step 1: Facilitator introduces Part 2 of the module

Action: Facilitator reads or paraphrases the following introduction to Part 2 to participants.

“This part of the professional learning workshop involves viewing/reading the next section of the film/playscript. This part of the film/playscript is called *Part 2. School Encounters – Parents Talk about their Child’s School Experiences*. In this section, parents talk about their child’s interactions at school with peers, educators, and the educational system. Remember that these are the actual experiences that are being narrated as the mothers described them.”

Step 2: Let’s begin! – Distribution of materials

Action: Facilitator distributes Worksheet 2 to participants and advises participants that they can use Worksheet 2 to write down and record their responses to the question as they watch the film.

The question is:

- “What did the mothers report in relation to their child’s experiences at school in Part 2? Consider positive and negative experiences. Highlight what worked well and what did not.”

Action: Participants view Part 2 of the film, “*School Encounters. Parents Talk about their Child’s School Experiences*” or engage in a group reading of Part 2 of the playscript.

Step 3: Whole group discussion

Action: After screening/reading Part 2 of the film/playscript, the Facilitator asks workshop participants to share the ideas that they recorded on Worksheet 2 with the entire group while the Facilitator writes these points on a whiteboard. These experiences as reported by the mothers in the film/playscript can be positive and/or negative. Participants can also highlight what worked well in relation to educator/school responses and what didn't.

Facilitator's note: If the group discussion has stalled or slowed, use some of the following prompts to generate conversation:

- schools'/educators' reinforcement of 'traditional' masculine/feminine traits (such as an expectation of long hair for students who are female).
- classroom/school activities which caused the child to be singled out as 'different'.
- bullying, teasing, and peer harassment.
- schools positioning social wellbeing as intertwined in education.
- subtle and overt discrimination against GSD people/identities.
- exclusion from classroom/school activities.
- GSD student support groups.
- GSD student's sense of belonging.
- educators' provision of safe spaces for the GSD student.
- no appropriate resources (e.g., books addressing gender and sexuality diversity).
- moving classes, adjusting student's timetable.
- celebrating gender and sexuality diversity through Wear It Purple Day.
- inclusive practices, education about GSD identities.
- GSD students finding supportive, like-minded peers.
- reading of GSD inclusive books to classes.
- problems with outdated name ("dead name") on enrolment forms and other administration.
- reluctance to share information about GSD identities.
- staff wanting GSD student's experience to be student led.

Step 4: Small group discussion and reporting back

Action: Facilitator reads or paraphrases the following to participants:

“In this activity, you will need to be in groups of no more than four participants. Each group will receive a Quote Card, on which there is a list of quotes from the film/playscript. As a group, read each quote, then identify one quote from the card that particularly resonates with your group. Discuss why this is the case. You will need to have a scribe and reporter who can report back to the larger group.”

Action: Facilitator forms small groups of no more than four participants. Each group is given a Quote Card (see pages 48–50) with a list of quotes from the film/playscript. Each group should identify one quote from their card that particularly resonates with them and discuss why this is the case for the group. The group reporter should share the key points raised in their discussion with the larger group.

Quote Cards

Action: Facilitator will need to copy these so as to be able to distribute one card per group. If there are more than three groups, then there may be double ups – for example, two groups receive the same quote card.

Quote Card 1

Mother of Meg: I had to actually do my own background work to be able to protect her in her transition. So, I went through the education legal bulletins and worked out what I was able to protect her with and what I could educate the principal on because she'd never heard of gender dysphoria which my child was diagnosed with.

Mother of Asha: He said, "If he's not doing well socially, we'll just change his class" and moved him out of that class on the spot. The fact that the school considers social wellbeing to be absolutely intertwined with education is critical. If you are not happy socially, if you're not confident in your belonging, your sense of belonging, then you can't learn. If you're constantly on the defensive, how do you engage academically? Asha's had issues, he's had times when – socially – things weren't working terribly well and that kind of stuff, but there's never been a sense that he didn't belong at that school.

Mother of Emma: They'd read the "I Am Jazz" book which was one from our personal library and [Emma had] taken it to school. They read it in Emma's class and the two other classes that were from her year group. They also read it to Marnie's – her older sibling's class – because Marnie said the kids in her class also knew Emma as a boy and she was quite worried that they wouldn't understand or accept what was going on. She didn't want to be teased or have to explain it to every single person. The school was reluctant to put transgender education out to all the students, so it was really just Emma's year group, which was Year 3 at the time, and Marnie's year group – which was Year 5 at the time.

Quote Card 2

Mother of Meg: Meg's teacher said to me at a meeting, "I avoid talking about transgender stuff. I avoid gender dysphoria. I avoid anything to do with gender or the LGBTQ community because that is not my role. It is not my role to teach that. It is not my role in the school to teach other children about that. It's got nothing to do with me."

Mother of Bridget: But very soon, she started being bullied. Like really, really seriously. ... I was reporting this to the school. But they weren't able to do anything. So, Bridget was actually becoming terrified and wouldn't go to school. ... And when I spoke to the school, they just said, "Look, you know, if your daughter will come and point to the pictures of all the relevant kids, we will deal with it." But she wouldn't because she was too afraid to do that because the kids live near us, like 50 metres away. ... So eventually I just gave up and said, okay. We're going to look elsewhere.

Mother of River: There was a child who transitioned in Year 6 at River's school. It was just handled so beautifully by the school. Like it was just the most perfect thing. They took the kids in her year and had a separate talk with them and just talked about what was going to happen. The child was going to come to school and she was going to have a different name and we're all going to try and use her new name. Sometimes we might make mistakes and that's okay because we'll just apologise and move on – like everything was handled so beautifully. I know with that there were lots of discussions about gender. That was when River was in Year 5, in a composite class of 5/6. So they got all the 5/6 kids together, that's right, and explained what would be happening with the child coming to school with a different name and in the girl's uniform and that kind of thing.

Quote Card 3

Mother of Asha: Asha has actually had a really good experience at school. When he started high school, his year advisor was also the rainbow advisor for the school and when we met him on enrolment day he complimented Asha's blue hair, apologised for the fact that his was black at the moment and said, "Don't worry, it will be purple again soon!" [Laughs]. And like, Wear It Purple Day was the biggest event for the year; it was huge, it was a really big deal. They had awards for the best dressed and they made videos of it and kids doing cartwheels and dancing. They just made it incredibly celebratory – and, yeah, not serious. I think that that's been the takeaway to me that I wouldn't have thought about before, was just making it fun.

Mother of River: A few teachers actually came and apologised to River because they had done class activities that involved splitting the class into boys and girls, and they realise now that that's not okay and they are not going to do that anymore and were really just so kind to acknowledge that they'd done that. A few teachers have made some – like misgendered them and have just apologised and moved on and it's not been a big deal.

Mother of Jordie: Jordie is suffering with a lot of anxiety through feelings of exclusion, wider feelings of exclusion, so we're going through a whole process of psychiatry at the moment and anti-depressant medication. This is because, even though there is the group, the wider impacts of the school – which is very heteronormative and cisgender – it's actually had quite a negative impact on her. Rather than the school doing any kind of adjusting or addressing, it's been, "Oh, let's see if we can counsel Jordie" rather than the school doing something different.

Step 5: Individual reflection and sharing

Action: Facilitator reads or paraphrases the following to participants:

“With the insights that you have now and thinking about your classroom practices and the broader context in which you work, use the space on Worksheet 2 to record your personal responses to the following questions. When considering these questions, you might like to think about them in relation to student/staff/family wellbeing, social wellbeing, visibility, academic inclusion, resources, and/or facilities. You might like to share your reflections with the person next to you.”

- What do you do well in relation to supporting GSD students and their families? Where or how could you personally improve if at all? What might you be able to do better?

Action: Facilitator reads or paraphrases the following to participants:

“We have heard a lot about the various experiences of gender and sexuality diverse students and how schools and educators addressed, or not, their needs. What have been the key takeaways for you from Part 2?”

Action: Facilitator enables each participant to share their key takeaways. If the group is large, or if time is limited, a selection of responses would suffice.

Action: Facilitator reads or paraphrases the following to participants:

“Some of the issues raised today have been challenging. If this module has brought up any issues, don’t forget that support is available Australia-wide through Employment Assistant Program Schemes, Lifeline (ph. 13 11 14), or QLife LGBTIQ+ (ph. 1800 184 527).”

End of Part 2 activities

Part 3. Ways Forward. Parents Talk about what Schools can do



Step 1: Facilitator introduces Part 3 of the module

Facilitator's Note: For this section, the Facilitator should have copies of relevant school and state/territory-based resources/policies/guidelines where gender and sexuality diversity should be included (e.g., welfare policy; values education; anti-bullying; gender equity; duty of care etc). These will need to be distributed to the groups formed for Step 5.

Pages 55–61 list the state/territory government Departmentally-sponsored materials relevant to the inclusion of gender and sexuality diversity in public schools. Please select the state/territory materials relevant to your location. Please also be aware of the federal Australian Student Wellbeing Framework discussed in the opening section of this Booklet, as a framework to guide educators' support and affirmation of GSD students.

Action: Facilitator reads or paraphrases the following introduction to Part 3 to participants.

“This part of the professional learning module involves viewing/reading the third and final section of the film/playscript: *Part 3. Ways Forward. Parents talk about what Schools can do.* In Part 3, parent voices from across the research have been amalgamated into the voices of the six mothers who participants met in Parts 1 and 2. Once again, participants are engaging with the actual experiences and words of parents of GSD young people.

In this section, parents make suggestions as to what they think schools/educators currently do well or what schools/educators could do differently or better into the future to support the educational and social needs of GSD students. As you watch the film/read the playscript, take notes about:

- What surprised you about Part 3?
- Was there anything that resonated with you? Why? Why not?”

Step 2: Let's begin! – Distribution of materials

Action: Facilitator distributes copies of Worksheet 3 for participants to use to take notes during the viewing/reading of Part 3, in preparation to share with others.

Action: Participants view Part 3 of the film, “Ways Forward. Parents Talk about what Schools can do” or engage in a group reading of Part 3 of the playscript.

Step 3: Whole group discussion

After screening/reading Part 3 of the film/playscript, the Facilitator asks participants to reflect on their responses from Worksheet 3 to stimulate thought and discussion. Participants can use these responses to help to contribute their ideas to the broader group discussion.

Action: Facilitator asks participants the following questions one at a time and waits for responses after each before moving to the next question. Facilitator may choose to record these on a whiteboard.

- What surprised you about Part 3?
- Was there anything that resonated with you? Why?

Step 4: Orienting the group in preparation for charting ways forward

Action: Facilitator reads or paraphrases the following to participants:

“The activities in Part 3 provide an opportunity to examine school policy documents, relevant state/territory policy documents, as well as your own pedagogical approaches and practices in relation to gender and sexuality diversity. The focus of the activities in this section is to think about, and plan around, what might be done to make a difference for GSD students and their families in your school.

Before beginning, however, it's important to get a bit of background about what parents want in relation to gender and sexuality diversity inclusions and to be aware of the importance of a supportive education for GSD students.

In the research on which this film/playscript is based, Australian public-school parents overwhelmingly reported that they want policy, pedagogical practices and curriculum to include and support the emotional, physical, social and educational wellbeing of GSD children. Parents want children to be safe and supported at school. This research, which was nationally representative – meaning that findings can be reasonably assumed to be representative of the actual beliefs of parents – found that, despite what we have heard in the media, over 80% of Australian parents who have a child attending an Australian public school want gender and sexuality diversity addressed in the school curriculum at an age-appropriate level. Most parents want this to be included in an age-appropriate way from Stage 3 (Years 5 & 6) onwards.¹⁵”

¹⁵ This research is cited within the “Frequently Asked Questions” section of this document on pages 18–20. Additionally, the GSDS project website provides access to all related publications at: <https://westernsydney.edu.au/gds/outcomes-publications>.

“Importantly, other large-scale research with Australian students shows that having a formalised commitment to supporting the safety and wellbeing of GSD students, through inclusive policy and curriculum, greatly improves their sense of connectedness to school. There is now solid evidence that when schools do not have effective policy and support for GSD students, these students are more likely to be discriminated against, disengaged from school, and fail to thrive academically and socially. This research also demonstrates the importance of acknowledging, addressing, and teaching about the impact of homophobic and transphobic language, harassment and bullying in schools.¹⁶

In this section of the workshop, the following themes will form the basis for discussion. These themes are the ideas that were highlighted in *What Parents Want: Talking about Gender and Sexuality Diversity in Schools* and, particularly, what parents raised in Part 3 of the film/ playscript. The themes include:

1. Policy Impacting Practice and Communicating School Values
2. Pedagogy to Support Wellbeing, and Counter Bullying/Harassment
3. Social, Emotional and Physical Wellbeing
4. Curriculum.”

Step 5: Thinking through change – Small group activity

Action: *The Facilitator divides participants into small groups as may be relevant to the cohort. For instance, small groups could be formed in relation to Year or Stage level (e.g., Stage 3 teachers; teachers of Year 5 etc.), specialist role (e.g., welfare; executive); key learning area or discipline etc.*

The Facilitator provides each group with a different “Theme Card” that addresses one of the themes and asks one member of each group to serve as the scribe/reporter. Participants work through the card’s questions in relation to the relevant local and state/territory policy documents which have been distributed by the Facilitator. At the end of the activity, each reporter feeds back their findings to the whole group while the Facilitator records these on a whiteboard/butchers’ paper. This information should be collated and returned to participants for future use in staff discussions and planning on ways to move forward.

Facilitator’s note: These activities are outlined in Worksheet 3 which should be used to guide participants through the activities.

Action: *The Facilitator reads or paraphrases the following to participants:*

“All groups have received a different “Theme Card” that addresses one of the themes mentioned earlier. Participants need to work through the card’s questions in relation to the relevant local and state/territory policy documents which have been distributed by the Facilitator. Each small group will need to select a scribe who will write down responses to the proposed questions and a reporter who will report back to the larger group. At the end of the activity, each small group will feed back their findings to the broader group”.

¹⁶ Participants who are interested in reading this material on their own can be directed back to the links provided within the “Frequently Asked Questions” section of this document on pages 18–20. You may also share with them the *Free2Be...Yet?* research (Ullman, 2021), available here: <https://healtheducationresources.unesco.org/library/documents/free2be-yet-second-national-study-australian-high-school-students-who-identify>.

Facilitator's note: The following text appears on the "Theme Cards".

Theme Card 1: Policy Impacting Practice and Communicating School Values

In small groups discuss this theme in relation to yourself and your school.

Background Information

Research shows that curricular and policy inclusions have a significant influence on the wellbeing and academic outcomes of GSD students at school.

GSD students in schools with inclusive policies report significantly higher levels of school-based wellbeing, including higher school belonging and an increased sense that their teachers are personally invested in them.¹⁷

Consider the following parents' statements from the film/playscript when responding to the questions that follow:

Simply saying that you don't support anti-LGBTQI activity is insufficient; educators need to understand and appreciate the complexity of what our kids are going through... The changing of policy and guidelines is great but it's not enough. There needs to be training on the emotional toll on our children and ways to foster inclusivity.
(River's Mum)

We need policies in place. We need really strong, strict protective policies in place that protect teachers and the kids
(Meg's Mum)

Activity: Consider these questions as a part of your small group discussion

- Review and discuss your school's policy documents in relation to gender and sexuality diversity. Where are the inclusions? Where are the omissions? How do these policies position gender and sexuality diversity? Is the language used clear? Inclusive?
- To what extent do your school policies acknowledge GSD students (and their families) as a named cohort which may require special consideration, support or awareness?
- What do you notice about the language that is used and the members of the school community that might be named as stakeholders?
- What needs to be changed/amended? Why do you think this? How will this be actioned?
- How do your school's policies align with the Australian Student Wellbeing Framework's pillar of "Inclusion" and/or your state/territory's policy guidance for the support of GSD students?

¹⁷ Participants who are interested in reading this material on their own can be directed to the *Free2Be...Yet?* research (Ullman, 2021), available here: <https://healtheducationresources.unesco.org/library/documents/free2be-yet-second-national-study-australian-high-school-students-who-identify>.

Theme Card 2: Pedagogy to Support Wellbeing, and Counter Bullying/Harassment

In small groups discuss this theme in relation to yourself and your school.

Background Information

Australian research with GSD high school students shows a startling 93% of this cohort has heard homophobic language at school, with 37% of these young people reporting that they hear this language daily. Of those who reported peers using this language within earshot of school staff, merely 6% reported that school staff always intervened to put a stop to its use.¹⁸

While transphobic language was reported with less frequency, 71% of GSD high school students reported ever hearing such language at school. Nearly 57% of these students reported that their teachers never, or hardly ever, intervened.¹⁹

Consider the following parents' statements from the film/playscript when responding to the questions that follow:

At the core of all our policy decisions is the wellbeing of students. But then there was nothing that said how do you actually ensure the wellbeing of a trans child?
(Emma's Mum)

The changing of policy and guidelines is great, but it's not enough. There needs to be training on the emotional toll on our children and ways to foster inclusivity
(River's Mum)

Activity: Consider these questions as a part of your small group discussion

- How is your school's anti-bullying policy inclusive of gender and sexuality diversity, if at all? In what ways is it effective or not?
- How well is anti-bullying policy enacted in your school in relation to gender and sexuality diversity?
- What are the limitations of having gender and sexuality diversity in anti-bullying policies?
- What does your school's anti-bullying policy need to incorporate, omit, or develop to improve its application and inclusion?
- How does your school's anti-bullying policy align with the Australian Student Wellbeing Framework's pillar of "Inclusion" and/or your state/territory's policy guidance for the support of GSD students?

¹⁸ Participants who are interested in reading this material on their own can be directed to the *Free2Be...Yet?* research (Ullman, 2021), available here: <https://healtheducationresources.unesco.org/library/documents/free2be-yet-second-national-study-australian-high-school-students-who-identify>.

¹⁹ See above.

Theme Card 3: Social, Emotional and Physical Wellbeing

In small groups discuss this theme in relation to yourself and your school.

Background Information

Research shows that GSD students engage more fully and feel more connected to school when they have an advocate at school and a sense that their educators are interested in their wellbeing.²⁰ The promotion of a positive school climate with respect to gender and sexuality diversity – one that offers positive visibility, inclusion and celebration of GSD identities – has a critical part to play in the wellbeing of these young people at school.

Many GSD young people experience harassment and violence at or on their way to school. For instance, over 60% of participants in a national study of GSD young people said that they had felt unsafe or uncomfortable in the past 12 months at secondary school due to their sexuality or gender identity.²¹ Safety concerns are compounded for students who are gender diverse.

It is important to note that young people do not have to identify as GSD to experience harassment and discrimination; often young people are harassed because others assume that they are GSD. Homophobia, biphobia, transphobia and related bias-based discrimination are used to regulate individuals' gender expression and sexuality and to limit the options for, and experiences of, all people.

Consider the following parents' statements from the film/playscript when responding to the questions that follow:

How can [anti gender/sexuality diversity] make another person feel and what impact can it have on another person? That sort of thing needs to be taught to teachers so that they in turn can communicate this to kids and lead by example – authentic example.
(Emma's Mum)

Educators need to understand and appreciate the complexity of what our kids are going through. The trauma that is involved to even be able to get to the point of coming out and then being expected to just get on with it amidst an environment of very little compassion is ludicrous.
(River's Mum)

When is the LGBTQ committee coming to schools? Where do they get a voice?... We have programs... for everything else... but we don't even have a voice for parents of LGBTQ students to come forward.
(Meg's Mum)

20 Participants who are interested in reading this material on their own can be directed to the Free2Be...Yet? research (Ullman, 2021), available here: <https://healtheducationresources.unesco.org/library/documents/free2be-yet-second-national-study-australian-high-school-students-who-identify>.

21 Participants who are interested in reading this material on their own can be directed to the Writing Themselves In 4 research (Hill et al., 2021), available here: https://www.latrobe.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/1198945/Writing-Themselves-In-4-National-report.pdf.

Activity: Consider these questions as a part of your small group discussion

- What do you think that you currently do well or not in relation to GSD students and their families?
- How can you make your pedagogy and practices more inclusive of GSD students and their families?
- What do you need to help you make your pedagogy more inclusive? Think about resources, policy/curriculum support, school leadership, community engagement.
- What are some ways that your school could improve its practices? What do you need to make it happen?
- How does your school's approach to gender and sexuality diversity-inclusive pedagogies align with the Australian Student Wellbeing Framework's pillar of "Inclusion" and/or your state/territory's policy guidance for the support of GSD students?

Theme Card 4: Curriculum

In small groups discuss this theme in relation to yourself and your school.

Background Information

Most GSD young people hear little, if anything, about gender and sexuality diversity in the school curriculum. For instance, merely 6% of students reported that it was “definitely true” that they had learned about GSD identities during their health and physical education instruction at school. Less than one in ten (8.5%) reported that their teachers had definitively discussed diversity of gender expression.²²

Additionally, GSD students in schools with a gender and sexuality diversity-inclusive curriculum and where teachers are reported to be positively oriented towards GSD individuals feel more connected to their schools and are more likely to report having an advocate at school.²³

Nearly all school curriculum ignores gender and sexuality diversity. Instead, heterosexual and cisgender identities are normalised and omnipresent. This means that GSD young people are not represented, and therefore do not see themselves in the curriculum. This can have long term implications for the social, emotional, physical and educational wellbeing of GSD young people.

Consider the following parents’ statements from the film/playscript when responding to the questions that follow:

That’s probably been the biggest hurdle: the body changes. I don’t feel like they’ve done much about it at school, like I don’t think they’ve talked much about the difference between gender and sexuality or sexual preferences.
(River’s Mum)

“Schools could do more as a curriculum, not as like you’ve got a transgender kid, let’s address this one person. They do stuff for culture.... but I don’t think that they identify that gender is also a broad thing.
(Bridget’s Mum)

Anybody who’s in the teaching space has an obligation to know how to support these kids.
(Jordie’s Mum)

22 Participants who are interested in reading this material on their own can be directed to the *Free2Be...Yet?* research (Ullman, 2021), available here: <https://healtheducationresources.unesco.org/library/documents/free2be-yet-second-national-study-australian-high-school-students-who-identify>.

23 See above.

Activity: Consider these questions as a part of your small group discussion

- How can gender and sexuality diversity be incorporated in the school curriculum in an age-appropriate way?
- How can gender and sexuality diversity be included in a whole of school approach?
- What current curriculum resources are available that are supportive or inclusive of GSD students?
- What needs to change to ensure curricular inclusion in our school – within, and beyond, relationships and sexual health education?
- How does your school’s approach to gender and sexuality diversity-inclusive curriculum implementation align with the Australian Student Wellbeing Framework’s pillar of “Inclusion” and/or your state/territory’s policy guidance for the support of GSD students?

Step 6: Ways Forward and Wrap Up

Action: *The Facilitator reads or paraphrases the following to participants:*

“In the Participant Booklet which you are about to receive, there is a checklist available on pages 22–24, called “Ways Forward: Checklist of Ideas for Gender and Sexuality Diversity Inclusion” which provides suggestions that could be used to identify ways to be more inclusive of GSD students and their families into the future. These suggestions should be discussed at your next staff/faculty meeting, along with the ideas that you’ve all come up with that have been recorded on the whiteboard and which I will collate and give to you, implemented where appropriate, and monitored against the checklist. It is important to include how these suggestions will be undertaken, by whom, and when. These ideas are not exhaustive, and staff are able to add other ideas to the list.”

Ways Forward: Checklist of Suggestions for Gender and Sexuality Diversity Inclusion
(available in the Participant Booklet)

Suggestions	Who? When? How?
<input type="checkbox"/> Review your local school policy to ensure it articulates provisions for gender diverse students (including students who identify as transgender, non-binary, gender fluid and transitioning) in relation to uniform, toilet and changeroom options, as well as administrative facilities.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Critically evaluate (if available) or design and implement policy that specifically addresses homophobia, biphobia, transphobia and other related bias-based discriminatory language.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Implement practical and meaningful ways to educate staff and students to raise awareness, visibility and normalisation about gender and sexuality diversity.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Create a pool of teaching resources/ideas that are age-appropriate and inclusive of gender and sexuality diversity for teacher use.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Invite parents into the process of creating policy and resources.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Ensure parents are educated about gender and sexuality diversity.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Develop a staff/parent/allies committee in the school to generate ideas and support for GSD students, families and staff.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Identify ways that the school can create safe spaces/options for GSD (and other marginalised or vulnerable) students.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Identify one or more teachers who can act as a “Rainbow Coordinator” who will support GSD students, families and staff and advocate for their needs.	

Suggestions	Who? When? How?
<input type="checkbox"/> Report bias or inappropriate behaviours and respond effectively through education and monitoring.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Provide gender and sexuality diversity training for all staff, including teachers, executive, and administrative staff, as well as school nurses and counsellors.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Teach about equity and justice.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Ensure students are aware that educators will not tolerate bullying/harassment within either the classroom or the broader school environment. Educators must work as a team to consistently demonstrate this through classroom/school practices. School policy needs to support this work.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Critically teach about respect on a whole school level; integrate this into the everyday experiences of the school and its culture.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Establish a classroom climate where GSD students feel safe, both in terms of curricular inclusions and to report marginalisation from peers or adults in the school.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Encourage respectful conversation about gender and sexuality diversity and clearly outline the parameters of appropriate and inappropriate language to describe GSD identities.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Consistently demonstrate that gender and sexuality diversity-focused slurs or discriminatory language will not be accepted under any circumstances through education.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Use visual stimuli to indicate support for diversity in the classroom or other areas of the school (e.g., supportive posters, using a rainbow lanyard, etc.).	
<input type="checkbox"/> Use ‘teachable moments’ to educate about gender and sexuality diversity.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Integrate gender and sexuality diversity-related topics/ references in ways that ‘normalise’ gender and sexuality diversity, rather than making it a ‘special’ or ‘taboo’ topic.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Develop other more equitable ways of allocating students to tasks/activities than by binary gender.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Consider how your school will embrace GSD families in the planning of school events.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Ensure the availability of single-occupant toilets and changing facilities for gender diverse/transgender students who may wish to use these.	

Suggestions	Who? When? How?
<input type="checkbox"/> Acknowledge that transgender students often wish to use the communal facilities commensurate with their gender identity and ensure this occurs.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Ensure that all students receive inclusive, relevant and age-appropriate physical and sexual health information which is a right of all young people.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Solicit, address, and work consistently to allay educators' concerns and fears about the parameters of relevant inclusions (e.g., which topics may be discussed, at which times and in what ways) and highlight the areas of the existing school curriculum in which there are clear provisions for inclusive material.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Refer to your state department of education guidelines and support documentation to assist you in making curriculum relevant to all students, including those who are GSD.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Other	

Step 7: Final Words

Action: *The Facilitator distributes the Evaluation Form and Participant Booklet to participants then reads/paraphrases the following:*

“This brings us to the end of the professional learning module. I hope that you understand more about GSD young people and feel confident to address the needs of GSD students and their families.

Some of the issues raised have been challenging. If this module has brought up any issues, support is available Australia-wide through Employment Assistant Program Schemes, Lifeline (ph. 13 11 14), or QLife LGBTIQ+ (ph. 1800 184 527).

You now have received a copy of the Participant Booklet. This contains the main elements of the professional learning module and provides some additional resources. Refer to this to assist you in moving forward on these issues.

All participants who have completed the module will receive a *Certificate of Completion*. These will be given to you in the next few days/weeks.

Please complete the Evaluation form and submit it to me before you leave.

Thank you and have a great day.”

End of Part 3 activities

End of module

Participant Worksheets

Facilitator's note: These participant worksheets should be copied and distributed at various identified points throughout the module – see instructions provided for each part for when.

Worksheet 1: Part 1. This is Us – Introducing our Children

- Whose story resonated with you most from Part 1? Why?
- Was there anything that surprised you? What? Why?
- Asha's mother said that 'heterosexuality hasn't been assumed as much in his entire schooling life as it certainly was for any of our generation'. What does this say about the changing experiences of young people?
- Jot down some of the experiences from Part 1 where emotions were spoken of or alluded to by the parents in relation to themselves or their child/ren. Include what the context was and how it made the parent/child feel.

In the film/playscript some parents talked about how the school made accommodations to support their child at school. Below is a list of some of these accommodations.

- Helping with the social transitioning of the child
- Reviewing classroom practices
- Rethinking gender assumptions
- Changing pronoun use
- Toilets and changeroom facilities
- Uniforms
- Increasing visibility of gender and sexuality diversity in the environment

In small groups, discuss these accommodations in relation to your school context. Use the following questions as a guide.

- What kinds of accommodations has our school made or could our school make?
- What might be the challenges associated with any of these? How might these be overcome?
- How can the whole school be involved in any of these accommodations?"

Worksheet 2. Part 2. School Encounters – Parents Talk about their Child’s School Experiences

Activity 1

What did the mothers report in relation to their child’s experiences at school in Part 2? Consider positive and negative experiences. Note these in the table below. Highlight what worked well or not.

Positive experiences	Negative experiences

What do you do well in relation to supporting GSD students and their families? Where or how could you personally improve, if at all? What might you be able to do better?

Worksheet 3: Part 3. Ways Forward – Parents Talk about what Schools can do

Activity 1

Jot down your thoughts about the following questions in preparation to share with others.

What surprised you in Part 3?

Was there anything that resonated with you in Part 3? Why? Why not?

Facilitator's Additional Resources

The following resources will need to be duplicated for distribution to participants to support participation in activities for Parts 2 and 3.

Facilitator Resource for Workshop 2. Quote Cards

The following quote cards should be printed off in preparation for dissemination. In this activity, the Facilitator forms small groups of no more than 4 participants. Each group is given a card with a list of quotes from the film/playscript. Each group should identify one quote from their card that particularly resonates with them and discuss why this is the case for the group. A group reporter can report back to the larger group about the key points/issues discussed in their group.

Quote Card 1

Mother of Meg: I had to actually do my own background work to be able to protect her in her transition. So, I went through the education legal bulletins and worked out what I was able to protect her with and what I could educate the principal on because she'd never heard of gender dysphoria which my child was diagnosed with.

Mother of Asha: He said, "If he's not doing well socially, we'll just change his class" and moved him out of that class on the spot. The fact that the school considers social wellbeing to be absolutely intertwined with education is critical. If you are not happy socially, if you're not confident in your belonging, your sense of belonging, then you can't learn. If you're constantly on the defensive, how do you engage academically? Asha's had issues, he's had times when – socially – things weren't working terribly well and that kind of stuff, but there's never been a sense that he didn't belong at that school.

Mother of Emma: They'd read the "I Am Jazz" book which was one from our personal library and [Emma had] taken it to school. They read it in Emma's class and the two other classes that were from her year group. They also read it to Marnie's – her older sibling's class – because Marnie said the kids in her class also knew Emma as a boy and she was quite worried that they wouldn't understand or accept what was going on. She didn't want to be teased or have to explain it to every single person. The school was reluctant to put transgender education out to all the students, so it was really just Emma's year group, which was Year 3 at the time, and Marnie's year group – which was Year 5 at the time.

Quote Card 2

Mother of Meg: Meg's teacher said to me at a meeting, "I avoid talking about transgender stuff. I avoid gender dysphoria. I avoid anything to do with gender or the LGBTQ community because that is not my role. It is not my role to teach that. It is not my role in the school to teach other children about that. It's got nothing to do with me."

Bridget: But very soon, she started being bullied. Like really, really seriously. ... I was reporting this to the school. But they weren't able to do anything. So, Bridget was actually becoming terrified and wouldn't go to school. ... And when I spoke to the school, they just said, "Look, you know, if your daughter will come and point to the pictures of all the relevant kids, we will deal with it." But she wouldn't because she was too afraid to do that because the kids live near us, like 50 metres away. ... So eventually I just gave up and said, okay. We're going to look elsewhere.

Mother of River: There was a child who transitioned in Year 6 at River's school. It was just handled so beautifully by the school. Like it was just the most perfect thing. They took the kids in her year and had a separate talk with them and just talked about what was going to happen. The child was going to come to school and she was going to have a different name and we're all going to try and use her new name. Sometimes we might make mistakes and that's okay because we'll just apologise and move on – like everything was handled so beautifully. I know with that there were lots of discussions about gender. That was when River was in Year 5, in a composite class of 5/6. So they got all the 5/6 kids together, that's right, and explained what would be happening with the child coming to school with a different name and in the girl's uniform and that kind of thing.

Quote Card 3

Mother of Asha: Asha has actually had a really good experience at school. When he started high school, his year advisor was also the rainbow advisor for the school and when we met him on enrolment day he complimented Asha's blue hair, apologised for the fact that his was black at the moment and said "Don't worry, it will be purple again soon!" [Laughs]. And like, *Wear It Purple Day* was the biggest event for the year; it was huge, it was a really big deal. They had awards for the best dressed and they made videos of it and kids doing cartwheels and dancing. They just made it incredibly celebratory – and, yeah, not serious. I think that that's been the takeaway to me that I wouldn't have thought about before, was just making it fun.

Mother of River: A few teachers actually came and apologised to River because they had done class activities that involved splitting the class into boys and girls, and they realise now that that's not okay and they are not going to do that anymore and were really just so kind to acknowledge that they'd done that. A few teachers have made some – like misgendered them and have just apologised and moved on and it's not been a big deal.

Mother of Jordie: Jordie is suffering with a lot of anxiety through feelings of exclusion, wider feelings of exclusion, so we're going through a whole process of psychiatry at the moment and anti-depressant medication. This is because, even though there is the group, the wider impacts of the school – which is very heteronormative and cisgender – it's actually had quite a negative impact on her. Rather than the school doing any kind of adjusting or addressing, it's been, "Oh, let's see if we can counsel Jordie" rather than the school doing something different.

Facilitator Resource for Workshop 3. Theme Cards

Theme Card 1: Policy Impacting Practice and Communicating School Values

In small groups discuss this theme in relation to yourself and your school.

Background Information

Research shows that curricular and policy inclusions have a significant influence on the wellbeing and academic outcomes of GSD students at school.

GSD students in schools with inclusive policies report significantly higher levels of school-based wellbeing, including higher school belonging and an increased sense that their teachers are personally invested in them.

Consider the following parents' statements from the film/play when responding to the questions that follow:

Activity: Consider these questions as a part of your small group discussion

Simply saying that you don't support anti-LGBTQI activity is insufficient; educators need to understand and appreciate the complexity of what our kids are going through... The changing of policy and guidelines is great but it's not enough. There needs to be training on the emotional toll on our children and ways to foster inclusivity.
(River's Mum)

We need policies in place. We need really strong, strict protective policies in place that protect teachers and the kids
(Meg's Mum)

- Review and discuss your school's policy documents in relation to gender and sexuality diversity. Where are the inclusions? Where are the omissions? How do these policies position gender and sexuality diversity? Is the language used clear? Inclusive?
- To what extent do your school policies acknowledge GSD students (and their families) as a named cohort which may require special consideration, support or awareness?
- What do you notice about the language that is used and the members of the school community that might be named as stakeholders?
- What needs to be changed/amended? Why do you think this? How will this be actioned?
- How do your school's policies align with the Australian Student Wellbeing Framework's pillar of "Inclusion" and/or your state/territory's policy guidance for the support of GSD students?

Theme Card 2: Pedagogy to Support Wellbeing, and Counter Bullying/Harassment

In small groups discuss this theme in relation to yourself and your school.

Background Information

Australian research with GSD high school students shows a startling 93% of this cohort has heard homophobic language at school, with 37% of these young people reporting that they hear this language daily. Of those who reported peers using this language within earshot of school staff, merely 6% reported that school staff always intervened to put a stop to its use.

While transphobic language was reported with less frequency, 71% of GSD high school students reported ever hearing such language at school. Nearly 57% of these students reported that their teachers never, or hardly ever, intervened.

Consider the following parents' statements from the film/play when responding to the questions that follow:

At the core of all our policy decisions is the wellbeing of students. But then there was nothing that said how do you actually ensure the wellbeing of a trans child?
(Emma's Mum)

The changing of policy and guidelines is great, but it's not enough. There needs to be training on the emotional toll on our children and ways to foster inclusivity
(River's Mum)

Activity: Consider these questions as a part of your small group discussion

- How is your school's anti-bullying policy inclusive of gender and sexuality diversity, if at all? In what ways is it effective or not?
- How well is anti-bullying policy enacted in your school in relation to gender and sexuality diversity?
- What are the limitations of having gender and sexuality diversity in anti-bullying policies?
- What does your school's anti-bullying policy need to incorporate, omit, or develop to improve its application and inclusion?
- How does your school's anti-bullying policy align with the Australian Student Wellbeing Framework's pillar of "Inclusion" and/or your state/territory's policy guidance for the support of GSD students?

Theme Card 3: Social, Emotional and Physical Wellbeing

In small groups discuss this theme in relation to yourself and your school.

Background Information

Research shows that GSD students engage more fully and feel more connected to school when they have an advocate at school and a sense that their educators are interested in their wellbeing. The promotion of a positive school climate with respect to gender and sexuality diversity – one that offers positive visibility, inclusion and celebration of GSD identities – has a critical part to play in the wellbeing of these young people at school.

Many GSD young people experience harassment and violence at or on their way to school. For instance, over 60% of participants in a national study of GSD young people said that they had felt unsafe or uncomfortable in the past 12 months at secondary school due to their sexuality or gender identity. Safety concerns are compounded for students who are gender diverse.

It is important to note that young people do not have to identify as GSD to experience harassment and discrimination; often young people are harassed because others assume that they are GSD. Homophobia, biphobia, transphobia and related bias-based discrimination are used to regulate individuals' gender expression and sexuality and to limit the options for, and experiences of, all people.

Consider the following parents' statements from the film/play when responding to the questions that follow:

How can [anti gender/sexuality diversity] make another person feel and what impact can it have on another person? That sort of thing needs to be taught to teachers so that they in turn can communicate this to kids and lead by example – authentic example.
(Emma's Mum)

Educators need to understand and appreciate the complexity of what our kids are going through. The trauma that is involved to even be able to get to the point of coming out and then being expected to just get on with it amidst an environment of very little compassion is ludicrous.
(River's Mum)

When is the LGBTQ committee coming to schools? Where do they get a voice?... We have programs... for everything else... but we don't even have a voice for parents of LGBTQ students to come forward.
(Meg's Mum)

Activity: Consider these questions as a part of your small group discussion

- What do you think that you currently do well or not in relation to GSD students and their families?
- How can you make your pedagogy and practices more inclusive of GSD students and their families?
- What do you need to help you make your pedagogy more inclusive? Think about resources, policy/curriculum support, school leadership, community engagement.
- What are some ways that your school could improve its practices? What do you need to make it happen?
- How does your school's approach to gender and sexuality diversity-inclusive pedagogies align with the Australian Student Wellbeing Framework's pillar of "Inclusion" and/or your state/territory's policy guidance for the support of GSD students?

Theme Card 4: Curriculum

In small groups discuss this theme in relation to yourself and your school.

Background Information

Most GSD young people hear little, if anything, about gender and sexuality diversity in the school curriculum. For instance, merely 6% of students reported that it was “definitely true” that they had learned about GSD identities during their health and physical education instruction at school. Less than one in ten (8.5%) reported that their teachers had definitely discussed diversity of gender expression.

Additionally, GSD students in schools with a gender and sexuality diversity-inclusive curriculum and where teachers are reported to be positively oriented towards GSD individuals feel more connected to their schools and are more likely to report having an advocate at school.

Nearly all school curriculum ignores gender and sexuality diversity. Instead, heterosexual and cisgender identities are normalised and omnipresent. This means that GSD young people are not represented, and therefore do not see themselves in the curriculum. This can have long term implications for the social, emotional, physical and educational wellbeing of GSD young people.

Consider the following parents’ statements from the film/play when responding to the questions that follow:

That’s probably been the biggest hurdle: the body changes. I don’t feel like they’ve done much about it at school, like I don’t think they’ve talked much about the difference between gender and sexuality or sexual preferences.
(River’s Mum)

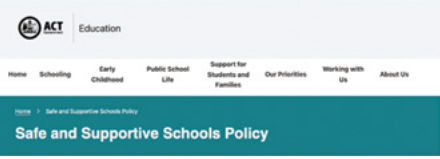




“Schools could do more as a curriculum, not as like you’ve got a transgender kid, let’s address this one person. They do stuff for culture... but I don’t think that they identify that gender is also a broad thing.
(Bridget’s Mum)

Anybody who’s in the teaching space has an obligation to know how to support these kids.
(Jordie’s Mum)

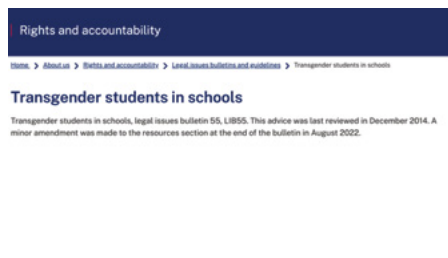
Activity: Consider these questions as a part of your small group discussion

- How can gender and sexuality diversity be incorporated in the school curriculum in an age-appropriate way?
- How can gender and sexuality diversity be included in a whole of school approach?
- What current curriculum resources are available that are supportive or inclusive of GSD students?
- What needs to change to ensure curricular inclusion in our school – within, and beyond, relationships and sexual health education?
- How does your school’s approach to gender and sexuality diversity-inclusive curriculum implementation align with the Australian Student Wellbeing Framework’s pillar of “Inclusion” and/or your state/territory’s policy guidance for the support of GSD students?

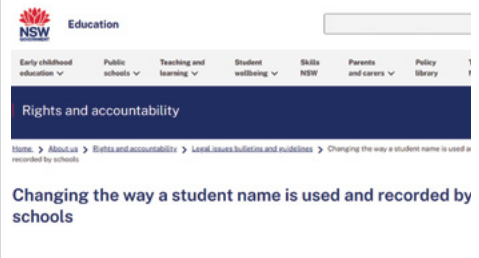
Federal and State/Territory Department of Education and Affiliate Policy Resources

Australian Capital Territory	
ACT Education Directorate	
<p><u>ACT Safe and Supportive Schools Policy and Procedure</u></p> 	<p><u>Changes to Dress Standards and Uniforms in Canberra Public Schools</u></p> 
<p><u>Dress Standards and Uniforms in Canberra Public Schools Policy</u></p> 	<p><u>Every Chance to Learn: Curriculum Framework for ACT Schools</u></p> <p>Every chance to learn Curriculum framework for ACT schools Preschool to year 10</p>
<p><u>Fact Sheet for Schools Offering Students Equitable Uniform Options</u></p> 	
Safe and Inclusive Schools Initiative, partnership with ACT Education Directorate	
<p><u>Safe and Inclusive Schools Initiative</u></p> 	

Bulletin 55: Transgender Students in Schools



Use/Recording of Student's Name




NSW Teachers Federation*

Gender, Sexuality and Identity Policy



TR14 Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia

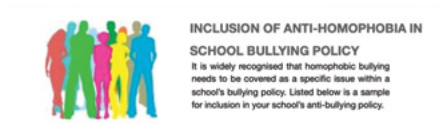


TR14.1 Introduction

This information leaflet is provided to assist members in dealing with and preventing homophobic, biphobic and/or transphobic behaviour, and is intended as an overview rather than a comprehensive document.

Homophobia, biphobia and transphobia have been identified as reasons why some people who identify as, or are perceived to be, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and/or queer (LGBTIQ) experience bullying, harassment, violence, discrimination and/or vilification. It can be the act of someone who is not consciously or intentionally acting in this manner, such as a passing comment or joke. On the other hand, it can be the deliberate act of someone to make another person uncomfortable, intimidated, hurt or injured such as name calling or graffiti.

Inclusion of Anti-Homophobia in School Bullying Program

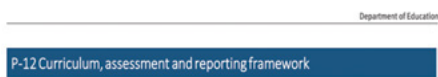


* Materials from the NSW Teachers Federation are not publicly accessible. Federation members will need to login in order to access the LGBTIQ+ Special Interest Group site (<https://members.nswtf.org.au/documents/lgbtiq/>) for access to these, and other, relevant materials.

Queensland

Queensland Department of Education

[Department of Education P-12 Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Framework](#)

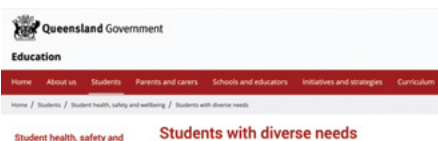


[Inclusive Education Policy](#)



Inclusive education policy

[Students with Diverse Needs](#)



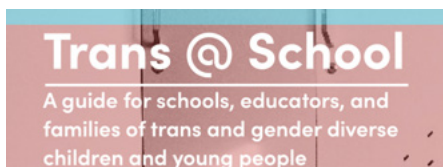
[Diversity in Queensland Schools](#)

Diversity in Queensland schools Policy template



Queensland Human Rights Commission

[Trans @ School: A Guide for Schools, Educators, and Families of Trans and Gender Diverse Children and Young People](#)



True Relationships and Reproductive Health, independent non-profit organisation, linked from multiple QLD Dept. of Education pages

[Supporting Trans and Gender Diverse Students in Your School Community](#)



South Australia

South Australia Department for Education

Gender Diverse and Intersex Children and Young People Support Procedure

Gender diverse and intersex children and young people support procedure

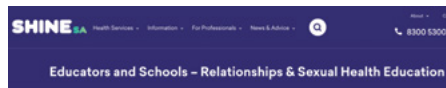
This is a mandated procedure under the department's operational policy framework. Any edits to this procedure must follow the process outlined on the [creating, updating and deleting operational policies](#) page.

Gender Diverse, Intersex and Sexually Diverse Children and Young People

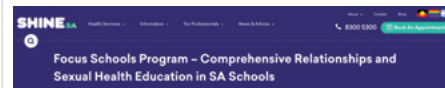


SHINE South Australia, working in partnership with the South Australia Department for Education

Education and Schools: Relationships and Sexual Health Education



Focus Schools Program: Comprehensive Relationships and Sexual Health Education in SA Schools



Northern Territory

Northern Territory Government

Student Wellbeing and Positive Behaviour Policy

Student Wellbeing and Positive Behaviour

Policy

Teacher Registration Board's Code of Ethics



Tasmania

Tasmanian Department for Education, Children, and Young People

[Inclusive Language Guidelines](#)



[LGBTIQ+ Equality and Inclusion in Education](#)



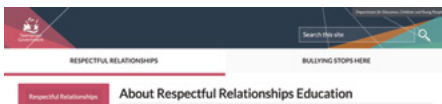
[LGBTIQ+ Equality in Tasmanian Government Schools](#)



[Professional Learning Institute: Affirmative Planning](#)



[Respectful Relationships](#)



[Supporting Sexual and Gender Diversity in Schools and Colleges Guidelines](#)



Working it Out, working in partnership with the Tasmanian Department for Education, Children, and Young People

[Working it Out](#)



Victoria

Victoria Department of Education and Training

[Guide to Making Your School Safe and Inclusive for LGBTI Students](#)



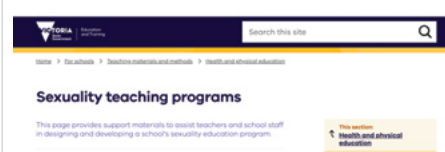
[LGBTIQ Student Support Policy](#)



[Safe Schools](#)



[Sexuality Teaching Programs](#)



FUSE, Curriculum Resources and Advice

[Catching on Early: Sexuality Education for Victorian Primary Schools](#)



[Catching on Later: Sexuality Education for Secondary Students](#)



[Resilience, Rights and Respective Relationships](#)



Western Australia

Equal Opportunity Commission of Western Australia

[Guidelines for supporting sexual and gender diversity in schools: Sexuality discrimination & homophobic bullying](#)



Commissioner for Children and Young People

[Supporting Trans and Gender Diverse Students in WA Schools](#)



[LGBTI Children and Young People](#)



Evaluation

Thank you for your participation in this professional learning workshop. Your feedback is valuable. Please respond thoughtfully to the following questions and return this form to the Facilitator.

What did you learn from this module?

What did you find surprising?

What did you enjoy or think was done well?

What do you feel could be improved?

Additional comments? Please use this space.

Certificate of Completion

**WESTERN SYDNEY
UNIVERSITY**



Certificate of Completion

This is to certify that



has completed the training

*What Parents Want: Talking
about Gender and Sexuality
Diversity in Schools*

Signed: Date:...../...../.....

WHAT PARENTS WANT:

Talking About Gender and Sexuality Diversity in Schools

A PROFESSIONAL LEARNING MODULE
FOR EDUCATORS

PARTICIPANT BOOKLET



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Suggested citation:

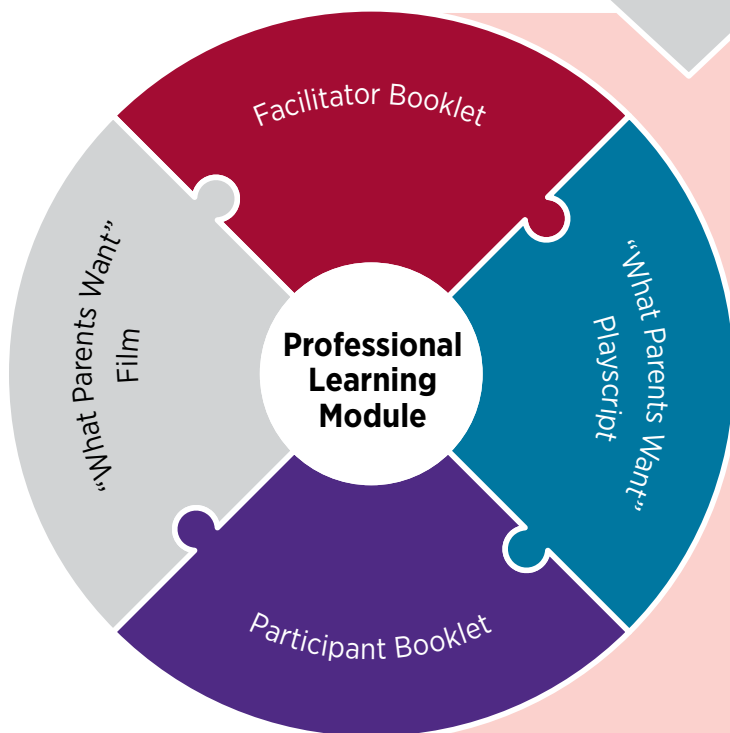
Ferfolja, T., & Ullman, J. (2023). *What Parents Want: Talking About Gender and Sexuality Diversity in Schools. A Professional Learning Module for Educators. Participant Booklet*. Centre for Educational Research, School of Education, Western Sydney University. Sydney, Australia.

This resource, like much of our work, is dedicated to all the gender and sexuality diverse young people who are trapped within systems that marginalise them, including schools, and to those we have lost in the struggle.

This Facilitator Booklet is one component of a professional learning module for educators and is part of a broader package of resources developed as a result of the findings of an Australian Research Council-funded project titled, ‘Gender and Sexuality Diversity in Schools. Parental Experiences and Schooling Responses’ (DP 180101676). The diagram below details the various components of the research on which this professional development model is based and on the structure of the professional development module itself. For more information about the research, professional development module, or to contact the researchers, visit: <https://westernsydney.edu.au/glds>.

Components of the Research:

- National Survey (Public School Parents)
- Interviews (Parents of GSD Students)
- Online Forum (Parents of GSD Students)
- Performed Ethnography



Resources available on the GLDS website alongside the Professional Learning Module:

- State “Snapshots” (Survey Results by State/Territory)
- Printable/post-able project data infographics
- Open-access, peer-reviewed academic publications
- Validated instrumentation to measure parents’ attitudes towards inclusivity (“PATII” Measure)
- GLDS Research Report

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all the parents who gave freely of their time to share their stories and perspectives about the inclusion of gender and sexuality diversity in schools for this research; without your support, the research and the associated resources, including this professional learning module, would not have been possible.

We would also like to thank the numerous primary and secondary school educators who gave up their evenings and weekends to participate in workshops in the development of this professional learning module and who provided constructive feedback. It is people like you who make a significant difference to the lives of gender and sexuality diverse (GSD) young people in schools.

Thanks to the research assistants who helped to produce this module. In particular, we would like to acknowledge the contributions of Sarah Oluk, who assisted with the early drafts of this module. Thanks also to Kate Manlik for her keen eye in providing editorial assistance and to Yunyin Xuan for her skilled desktop publishing.

Finally, we would like to acknowledge the Australian Research Council who funded the research, “Gender and Sexuality Diversity in Schools. Parental Experiences and Schooling Responses” (DP 180101676) on which this module is based.

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About this Professional Learning Module

This professional learning module has been written to accompany the film/playscript, *What Parents Want: Talking about Gender and Sexuality Diversity in Schools*. It is aimed at the professional learning of educators working in primary and/or secondary schools. It seeks to enhance educators' understandings about gender and sexuality diverse (GSD) young people and their experiences at school, and to generate discussion and action in terms of how educators can positively enhance the educational experience for these young people and their families.

Throughout this professional learning module and associated resources, we use the term *gender and sexuality diverse* (or GSD) as an inclusive term to describe the expansive diversity of gender identities and sexual orientations, without the need to name each of these. We use the acronym GSD (rather than gender and/or sexuality diverse) for the sake of simplicity; however, it is important to be aware that individuals may identify as both gender diverse and sexuality diverse or simply as one of these. The term GSD also mindfully includes individuals who may not wish to label themselves or align with a particular identity. This label is particularly useful when working with young people who may be aware that they are not heterosexual ("straight") or that their gender does not match the sex they were assigned at birth, but are unsure about how, or if, they wish to identify themselves beyond that.

The words used in the film/playscript are those used by parents verbatim as they shared their journey with their gender and sexuality diverse child at a particular point in time. A core value of this project was to validate and centre their voices.

It is critical to acknowledge that language used in this space, particularly around identity, is rapidly evolving. Thus, some of the language used by parents to describe their child's experience at the point of project participation has also evolved. As language can have a big impact on the well-being of gender and sexuality diverse people, all educators are encouraged to consult with local organisations who support gender and sexuality diversity to ensure that they are using the most appropriate terminology when working with young people and their families.

Despite changes in the legal and social landscape of Australia, many GSD young people still experience stigma and discrimination, particularly in schools. The intention of this professional learning module is to help educators understand the experiences of GSD students in order to provide safe and supportive environments for students' academic success and wellbeing.

This professional learning module is centred around three key goals: first, to raise educators' awareness about gender and sexuality diversity; second, to make space for this form of diversity in primary and secondary schools; and third, to ensure the wellbeing of all students. To achieve this, there are three parts to this professional learning module, which correspond to the three parts of the accompanying film/playscript:

- Part 1: This is Us. Introducing our Children.
- Part 2: School Encounters. Parents Talk about their Child's School Experiences.
- Part 3: Ways Forward. Parents Talk about what Schools can do.

Research Project Background

This professional learning module has been developed from a nationally representative research study conducted across Australia. There were two major components to the research: the first, was a comprehensive survey of parents (N = 2,093) of children in primary and secondary public schooling which sought parents' perspectives about the inclusion of gender and sexuality diversity-related curriculum in school education. Nationally representative findings from this part of the study are available on our project website:

<https://westernsydney.edu.au/glds/outcomes-publications>.

In addition to providing the first nationally representative data detailing what Australian public-school parents want with respect to the inclusion of gender and sexuality diversity in the curriculum, the survey also asked about the prevalence of GSD children in their households. Findings highlighted that GSD children come from a diverse range of families, including families living in cities, regional and remote areas of Australia; families where parents were born in Europe, Asia, Africa and the Americas and speak a variety of different languages at home; families where parents identify as Christian, Hindu, Buddhist, Jewish, Muslim and as not religious.

An additional element of the research project involved interviews with, and an online forum for, parents of GSD children. This element explored parents' experiences of navigating the schooling system with/for their GSD child. This group of participating parents mostly identified as mothers and it is their voices that form the basis of the film, the associated playscript, and the stimulus resources within this accompanying professional learning module.

Performed Ethnography

The film/playscript that accompanies this professional learning module is based on a performed ethnography script. Performed ethnography uses the voices of research participants in the form of quotes and excerpts, which are woven together to create a verbatim playscript. In Parts 1 and 2 of the film, professional actors have taken on the voices of six interviewees. In Part 3, the researchers have amalgamated some of the data from other participants from both the interviews and forum into the voices of these six characters to form 'composite' characters. We have made these adaptations so that the many ideas for school inclusion as expressed by parents in the research more broadly could be incorporated into the film/playscript and this professional learning module.

Why is this Professional Learning Module important?

There are few professional learning modules available in Australia that directly aim to help educators support GSD students and their families in schools; however, there is considerable Australian research that illustrates why raising educators' awareness is critical for the safety, wellbeing and academic development of GSD young people. The existing Australian research in this area provides an opportunity for educators to reflect on the experiences of GSD students and raises awareness of the possible recommendations and provisions that encourage inclusivity in education settings.

Australian Student Wellbeing Framework

All Australian schools are expected to be familiar with and adhere to the Australian Student Wellbeing Framework. The Framework was developed using research evidence demonstrating the strong connection between students' safety, their wellbeing and, ultimately, their learning (see <https://studentwellbeinghub.edu.au/educators/framework/>).

One of the five principles of the Framework is "Inclusion", or the creation of an "inclusive and connected school culture" that "values diversity, and fosters positive, respectful relationships." You can read more about how educators can support inclusion using the Framework here: <https://studentwellbeinghub.edu.au/educators/framework/>.

The Framework validates the need for educators' awareness-raising on the topic of gender and sexuality diversity in order to support the wellbeing of GSD students.

AUSTRALIAN STUDENT WELLBEING FRAMEWORK

The **Australian Student Wellbeing Framework** supports Australian schools to provide every student with the strongest foundation possible for them to reach their aspirations in learning and in life.

The vision of the Framework is that Australian schools are learning communities that promote student wellbeing, safety and positive relationships so that students can reach their full potential.

The Framework is based on evidence that demonstrates the strong association between safety, wellbeing and learning.

Leadership



Inclusion



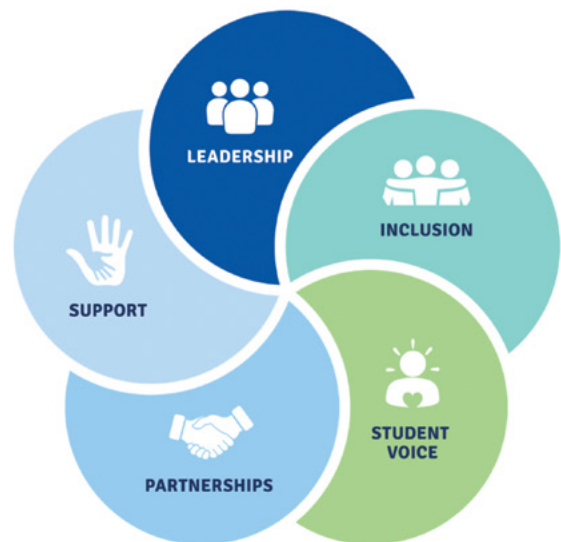
Student Voice



Partnerships



Support



Source: <https://studentwellbeinghub.edu.au/educators/framework/>

Educator Duty of Care

Educators and schooling institutions have a duty of care to students, which includes the protection of students' mental health and the prevention of discrimination and harassment. While the language used to articulate this varies somewhat across Australian states and territories, the general essence is the same: a directive for educators to provide safe and supportive schooling environments for all students in their care. More information and links to relevant legal documents, guidance and legislation across states and territories can be found here: <http://www.aussieeducator.org.au/education/dutyofcare.html>

Legal Expectations for Public School Educators

It is unlawful to discriminate on the basis of a number of protected attributes in certain areas of public life, including education and employment; these protected attributes include, but are not limited to, sex, intersex status, gender identity and sexual orientation. (See <https://www.ag.gov.au/rights-and-protections/human-rights-and-anti-discrimination/australias-anti-discrimination-law>.)

There are also Australian government guidelines which recognise sex and gender. These acknowledge that individuals may identify as “a gender other than the sex they were assigned at birth, or may not identify as exclusively male or female”. See the following site for more information about Australian Government guidelines on the recognition of sex and gender: <https://www.ag.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-03/AustralianGovernmentGuidelinesontheRecognitionofSexandGender.pdf>.

The Real Story: About the Film/Playscript

The parents whose voices are used in this film and the playscript are from real families from across Australia. They volunteered to participate in this research because they affirmed their child's gender and sexuality diversity and they wanted to have an opportunity to share their and their child's experiences with educators.

In this film/playscript, parents are identified by the name of their child (e.g. "Mother of Asha") and all names used are pseudonyms. Additionally, in the film, actors are playing the parts of the parents.

It is essential to note that not all parents of GSD students are supportive of their child's gender and/or sexuality diversity and some home situations for GSD young people are hostile. Schools may be the only place where GSD young people can be affirmed; this is one reason why it is critical for educators to know about gender and sexuality diversity and to understand the importance of supporting these areas of diversity within their school communities.

While watching the film or reading the playscript, you have met:



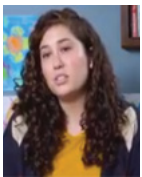
Shondelle Pratt as:
Mother of Asha (bisexual son)



Anna Cheney as:
Mother of River (gender fluid child)



Caritta Gronroos as:
Mother of Emma (transgender daughter)



Tricia Morosin as:
Mother of Meg (transgender daughter)



Tsu Shan Chambers as:
Mother of Bridget (transgender daughter)



Suz Mawer as:
Mother of Jordie (sexuality diverse daughter)

Module Overview

What Parents Want: Talking About Gender and Sexuality Diversity in Schools is divided into three parts. Both the full-length film and its various parts (three) can be found on the project YouTube Channel: <https://www.youtube.com/@genderandsexualitydiversit2500/featured>.

Part 1: This is Us. Introducing our Children introduces the audience to six parent participants who talk about their child's experiences of coming out and identifying as gender and/or sexuality diverse (GSD). You'll notice the parents in this section all identify as mothers; most of the people who participated in the research interviews and online forum identified as mothers. Part 1 will help you understand a little about these young people and their histories before hearing about their stories of schooling as described by their parent.

Part 2: School Encounters. Parents Talk about their Child's School Experiences shares parents' experiences of the school system in relation to their GSD child. In Part 2, we hear again from the same six parents from Part 1 who talk about their child's interactions with their peers and educators. We learn about what schools are doing well and what schools could do better in supporting GSD students.

Part 3: Ways Forward. Parents Talk about what Schools can do focuses on parents' ideas about what schools can do to support their child and other GSD young people into the future. The voices that you hear in this part are an amalgamation of voices from participants across the research.

Glossary of Terms

The following terms are useful for educators to know and have been provided for your information. Most of these terms have been used by the parents in the film/playscript and are in general circulation.

androgynous	Describes people who may not have distinctly masculine or feminine characteristics or who may display a combination of both masculine and feminine characteristics.
bisexual	Describes people who have sexual and/or romantic attraction to more than one gender. (See also pansexual.)**
came out/come out	We live in a world where heterosexuality and rigid gender norms are not only expected, but also presumed. The term “coming out” usually refers to the process by which a person’s sexual identity is disclosed to others. The term also refers to people sharing their gender identity or gender history.**
cisgender	Individuals whose personal gender identity matches their sex assigned at birth.
gay	Describes people who have the romantic and sexual capacity primarily for people of the same sex or gender, i.e. same-sex attracted. Historically the term “gay” has been used more for men in Australia but sometimes includes women.**
gender confirmation surgery	Gender confirmation surgery (also known as “gender affirmation surgery”) refers to procedures that help people transition to their self-identified gender. It is important to note that not all gender diverse people (see definition below) will want to have gender confirmation surgery and may transition in other ways. Gender confirmation surgery is not available to young people under the age of 18 in Australia. These young people may elect to take other, medically assisted and approved, approaches to assist their gender affirmation, including hormone therapy. What is possible for young people, with respect to the forms of these approaches and the various legal requirements, differs by state/territory.
gender diversity/diverse	Individuals whose gender identities/expressions do not align with the sex they were assigned at birth.
gender dysphoria	A diagnosis of “gender dysphoria” may be used in the fields of medicine and psychology to explain feelings of distress or discomfort that may be experienced by an individual when their gender identity does not align with their biological sex. It is important to note that not all gender diverse and/or transgender individuals experience these feelings of distress or discomfort. Gender dysphoria has been superseded by the term “gender incongruence”.
gender fluid	Describes people who do not identify themselves as having a fixed gender identity.
gender identity	A person’s deeply felt sense of who they are, whether a woman, a man, both, neither, or something else.**

gender non-conforming	Behaviour or expression of an individual that does not align with traditional, binary gender norms.
gender non-binary	Individuals who do not identify within the male/female, or masculine/feminine gender binary.
gender-queer	Describes people who do not subscribe to conventional gender distinctions but identify with neither, both, or a combination of the gender identities of man or woman or masculine or feminine.
heteronormativity	The construction of heterosexuality as the only natural, normal and superior sexuality, wherein all other forms of sexuality are positioned as deviant and abnormal. Heteronormativity includes the practices, policies and perspectives that privilege heterosexuality and position this form of sexuality as the normative standard.
lesbian	Describes women who are same-sex or gender attracted. Some non-binary individuals also use the term “lesbian” to describe their sexuality.
microaggression	Describes a statement, action, or incident regarded as an instance of indirect, subtle, or unintentional discrimination against members of a marginalised group such as GSD individuals.
misgender/misgendering	An occurrence where a person is described or addressed using language that does not match their gender identity (National LGBT Health Alliance, 2013b). This can include the incorrect use of pronouns (she/he/they), familial titles (father, sister, uncle) and, at times, other words that traditionally have gendered applications (pretty, handsome, etc.). It is best to ask the person, at a relevant moment, which pronouns they use.**
pansexual	Describes people who are sexually and/or romantically attracted to people across all the spectrums of sex and gender, and where sex and gender are irrelevant in the attraction. The term “pan” means “all”. (See also bisexual.)**
pronouns	Pronouns are the terms people use to indicate others’ gender identities when speaking or writing about them (e.g. he/she/they, his/hers/theirs, etc.).
sexuality diverse	Sexuality diverse can be used as an inclusive term to describe people who do not identify as heterosexual.
trans*/transgender	An individual whose gender identities/expressions do not align with the sex they were assigned at birth.
transition/transitioning	The personal process or processes a trans or gender-diverse person undertakes in recognising, accepting, and expressing their gender identity, including social, legal and/or medical aspects. It might include changes to appearance (clothing, hairstyle, etc.), and/or asking people to use a different name and pronoun (he/she/they, his/hers/theirs, etc.). It can often include the use of hormones and in some cases gender affirmation surgery.**

**These definitions are reproduced with permission from the “GSA Connect” resources developed by Twenty10, NSW Teachers Federation and Wear It Purple.
<https://www.gsaconnect.org.au/about/>.

Inclusive Language Guide¹

When working with other people, whether they are students, staff or parents/community members, it is critical to use inclusive and respectful language. Inclusive language should be used for personal communications, as well as in written documentation such as policies, programs, curricula and educational resources. Using inclusive language increases feelings of trust, safety and belonging and is a way to address the prejudice and discrimination that GSD people, including young people in schools, encounter.

Inclusive language recognises that bodies, genders, relationships and sexualities are diverse, and these aspects of identity may be expressed in different ways. Inclusive language should be used even when referring to someone who is not physically present as this is respectful of them and acknowledges the diversity present within every school.

The information below provides the basics for understanding inclusive language used to describe gender and sexuality diversity. For the sake of brevity, only key points are included below. More information can be found online on numerous government/education department websites (such as <https://www.vic.gov.au/inclusive-language-guide#what-are-the-basics>) or by engaging with local organisations who support gender and sexuality diversity.

What are the basics?

- Language in the area of gender and sexuality diversity is evolving and can be different across cultures and generations.
- The term “queer” may be seen as offensive by some older GSD people, whereas some younger people have reclaimed this term to define themselves.
- Where some transgender people or their family members describe the experience of being trans as being “born in the wrong body”, others may view this language as problematic, and refer to “presumptions” or “assumptions” about gender at birth, preferring not to label the body as “right” or “wrong”.
- Terms may also become outdated. For instance, the term “gender dysphoria” has been superseded by “gender incongruence”.
- Some people can feel overwhelmed by evolving language; do your best to be inclusive and if you make a mistake, apologise and move on.
- Do not assume a person is heterosexual or that they are in a heterosexual relationship. Use words such as “partner”, rather than “wife”/“husband”/“boyfriend” etc.
- Families are varied and complex. Do not assume your students live in a “nuclear” family or make assumptions about your students’ caregivers. Use terms such as “parent” or “carer”. It is best to ask your students about how they refer to their family composition and the language they use if you’re unsure.

¹ Adapted from <https://www.vic.gov.au/inclusive-language-guide#what-are-the-basics>.

- Be aware of the differences between gender, sex and sexuality. **Gender** is a part of how you see yourself and how you interact with others. Not everybody sees themselves as male or female and may understand their gender as a combination or neither of these. **Sex** refers to a person's biological sex characteristics and natural variations to sex characteristics are not uncommon. **Sexuality** refers to a person's romantic and/or sexual attraction to other people. Gender and sexuality diversity isn't a choice or preference – it is just how people are. (See the “Glossary of Terms” earlier in this booklet for the definitions of other terms used by parents in this research).
- Be guided by the individual. Do not assume a GSD individual wants to be or should be ‘out’ – that is – known as gender and/or sexuality diverse to others.
- As an educator, support for young people can be provided by using the pronouns they employ. Be open and make a space for students to share their pronouns with you, particularly if these have shifted for them or do not match school records. In general, if you need to know what pronoun a person uses, ask them respectfully what pronoun they *use* (not what pronoun they *prefer* – which suggests a choice and may be offensive).

Trigger Warning

Some of the parents' narratives refer to children's self-harm, suicide ideation, and experiences of discrimination. At times, the film/playscript contains stories that some viewers/readers may find difficult. Support is available Australia-wide through Employment Assistant Program Schemes, Lifeline (ph. 13 11 14), or QLife LGBTIQ+ (ph. 1800 184 527).

Frequently Asked Questions

Why do educators need to understand gender and sexuality diversity?

As outlined earlier, identifying as GSD is protected by several Federal and State laws including the Federal Anti-Discrimination Act. Educators have a duty of care to all students and their families. Thus, it is critical that educators are well-informed about the experiences of GSD young people and their families to ensure that they have access to a full and inclusive education that meets their needs, including a curriculum that reflects their lives and is of relevance to them. Students' learning is enhanced when their educators understand their needs and identities.

All young people have a right to be educated.

The challenges faced by GSD students can be immense. Research shows that there are negative social, emotional, and educational implications for GSD young people, particularly for those students who are unsupported. For some GSD children and youth, schools are the only potentially supportive spaces for them if they have been rejected by parents/family. Not all parents of GSD young people are supportive, and it is not uncommon for GSD young people to experience homelessness, family rejection and/or family violence. Students' wellbeing is linked to their engagement with school; accordingly, educators are in an ideal position to provide essential support and safe spaces for GSD children and young people.

Population-level research has shown that a significant number of Australians report same gender attraction and behaviour, including roughly 9% of men and 19% of women.² Approximately 1% of the adult population identifies as transgender.² Prevalence data for Australian young people is estimated to be higher, with the most recent large-scale survey of Australian teens showing 2.3% identifying as transgender or gender diverse, and roughly 1 in 4 identifying as either (1) gay or lesbian (4.7%); (2) bisexual (16.4%); or (3) not sure about their sexual orientation (5.2%).³

Despite the changing demographics of our society, gender and sexuality diversity is largely invisible in Australian schools and silenced in policy, curricula, pedagogy, and practice. Moreover, some school cultures are openly hostile towards students who identify as GSD. These realities can make schools unwelcoming places for GSD students, or those who are perceived to be GSD by others. Discrimination can result in myriad problems for young people's safety, educational engagement, and wellbeing.^{4,5} It is mandatory for all young people to attend school; thus, it is critical that educators understand their role in ensuring GSD students' time at school is supportive and affirming. This need is compounded by the fact that some parents are not supportive of gender and sexuality diversity. This means that some young people live in environments where their identity is not accepted or where they may be subject to overt physical and emotional hostility from parents, family members and friends.

2 A summary of the population-level data on the prevalence of GSD individuals comes from the "Research Matters" fact sheet created by Rainbow Health Victoria (2020), available here: <https://www.rainbowhealthvic.org.au/media/pages/research-resources/research-matters-how-many-people-are-lgbtqi/4170611962-1612761890/researchmatters-numbers-lgbtqi.pdf>.

3 The most current national survey of Australian secondary students ($N = 6327$) was published by La Trobe in 2019 and is available here: https://www.latrobe.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/1031899/National-Survey-of-Secondary-Students-and-Sexual-Health-2018.pdf.

4 The Public Health Association's 2022 policy position statement on comprehensive relationships and sexuality education links to the most current research from the field on the experiences of GSD students in Australian schools, available here: <https://www.phaa.net.au/documents/item/5635>.

5 *The Free2Be...Yet?* (Ullman, 2021) national survey of GSD high school students is the largest Australian survey of this cohort ($N = 2367$) and highlights the relationship between a discriminatory schooling environment and poorer school wellbeing outcomes, including lowered educational aspirations. The full report is available here: <https://healtheducationresources.unesco.org/library/documents/free2be-yet-second-national-study-australian-high-school-students-who-identify>.

Why are we doing this when no students in our school identify as GSD?

In lieu of representative, population-level data on the prevalence of GSD school-aged children and young people in Australia, multiple sources of research offer usable estimates. Recent research found that 1 in 4 Australian high school students sampled identified their sexual orientation as other than heterosexual; and 1 in 45 identified as gender diverse.³ Educators do not necessarily know who these students are; young people often do not disclose these aspects of their identity. It is important for educators in primary and secondary schools to know that they are likely to have GSD students in their classes. Just because an aspect of an individual's identity may not be outwardly visible, it does not mean that it is any less impactful on their life or their sense of self.

Additionally, young people need to be prepared for the world in which they are living. The advent of marriage equality in 2017 means that same-sex attraction is visible and important to understand. This reality is compounded in popular culture and social media where gender and sexuality diversity are frequently acknowledged. There has been increasing legal and social recognition of GSD people in Australia, particularly over the last decade or two, during which time many laws have been modified to be more inclusive of these forms of diversity.

What if parents don't approve of the mention or affirmation of gender and sexuality diversity in schools?

This professional learning module is aimed at developing educators' understandings and awareness of gender and sexuality diversity in schools so that they can support GSD young people as part of their duty of care. Educators often assume parents are resistant to gender and sexuality diversity in schools; however, this assumption is not based in research. Our nationally representative Australian research examining public school parents' perceptions of the inclusion/exclusion of gender and sexuality diversity in schools found that, on average, 82% of parents wanted to see gender and sexuality diversity introduced across the primary and secondary school curriculum in an age-appropriate way.^{6,7} If, while supporting the wellbeing of GSD students, educators receive negative feedback or commentary from parents, this should be referred to school leadership personnel who will be very familiar with the federal Australian Wellbeing Framework's directives for inclusivity of diversity and educators' legal responsibilities with respect to the prevention of discrimination and harassment of students.

6 While the *Gender and Sexuality Diversity in Schools (GSDS)* project website links to all publications and other resources associated with this Australian Research Council-funded national project, the published paper which overviews results from the national survey (Ullman et al., 2021) is available here: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14681811.2021.1949975>.

7 The full GSDS project report which outlines findings from across the five phases of research (Ferfolja et al., 2023) is available here: <https://westernsydney.edu.au/gsd/outcomes-publications>.

Aren't primary school children too young to know about their gender identity?

According to the Royal Children's Hospital in Melbourne, about 1.2% of Australian school children are thought to identify as transgender.⁸ Transgender and gender diverse children tend to first express their gender identity – through things like preferences for toys, clothing and interests – at the same time as all other children, around two or three years old. As is illustrated in Part 2 of the film and playscript, it is not uncommon for gender diverse and transgender children to want to express their gender and have their gender be affirmed by others during the primary school years or earlier.

Likewise, 2018 research based in the United States, which surveyed a representative sample of 9- and 10-year-olds and their parents, found that 0.4% of children aged 9 and 10 self-identified as transgender; 1.2% of the parents surveyed indicated that their child might identify as transgender.⁹ Even using these more conservative statistics, a primary school of 400 students, for example, may have one or two gender diverse or transgender students in any given year.

How prevalent is self-harming in children and young people?

A 2020 longitudinal survey of primary school students from a stratified random sample of 43 primary schools in Victoria found that 2.6% of children aged 11 and 12 years old reported self-harm behaviours.¹⁰ Further, this research showed that experiencing difficulties with peer relationships earlier in primary school was strongly associated with self-harm behaviours in late primary school (with 11- and 12-year-olds).

As outlined in LGBTIQ+ Health Australia's 2021 *Snapshot of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Statistics for LGBTIQ+ People*, compared to the general population, GSD young people are over four times as likely to engage in self-harm behaviours.¹¹ 2021 Australian national research indicated that 77% of their sample of gender diverse and transgender young people, aged 14 to 21 years old, had engaged in self-harm behaviours in their lifetime.¹²

8 The Royal Children's Hospital in Melbourne produces a number of fact sheets, including the following on gender dysphoria: https://www.rch.org.au/kidsinfo/fact_sheets/Gender_dysphoria/#:-:text=About%201.2%20per%20cent%20of,natural%20spectrum%20of%20human%20diversity.

9 This finding from a representative cohort investigating adolescent brain cognitive development (Calzo & Blashill, 2018) is available here: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6584307/>.

10 This Australian National Health and Medical Research Council-funded cohort study (Borschmann et al., 2020) assessed $N = 1239$ children annually from ages 8–9 to ages 11–12. The full findings are available here: <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0242802>.

11 LGBTIQ+ Health Australia has produced a "snapshot" document (2021) of research on mental health and suicide prevention statistics for this cohort, available here: https://assets.nationbuilder.com/lgbtihealth/pages/549/attachments/original/1648014801/24.10.21_Snapshot_of_MHSP_Statistics_for_LGBTIQ_People_-_Revised.pdf?1648014801.

12 The *Writing Themselves In 4* (Hill et al., 2021) report outlines the experiences of GSD young people, aged 14–21 years old, and is available here: https://www.latrobe.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/1198945/Writing-Themselves-In-4-National-report.pdf.

Review: Part 1. This is Us. Introducing our Children

This professional learning module seeks to familiarise participants about the experiences of GSD young people attending primary and secondary public schools across Australia. It draws on an Australian national research study where parents of GSD children shared their experiences of navigating the school system with and for their child. What the parents said in interviews and posts in an online forum was used by the researchers to develop a playscript and subsequent film entitled, *What Parents Want: Talking about Gender and Sexuality Diversity in Schools*. The words that are expressed in the film/playscript are thus the words and experiences of real parents.

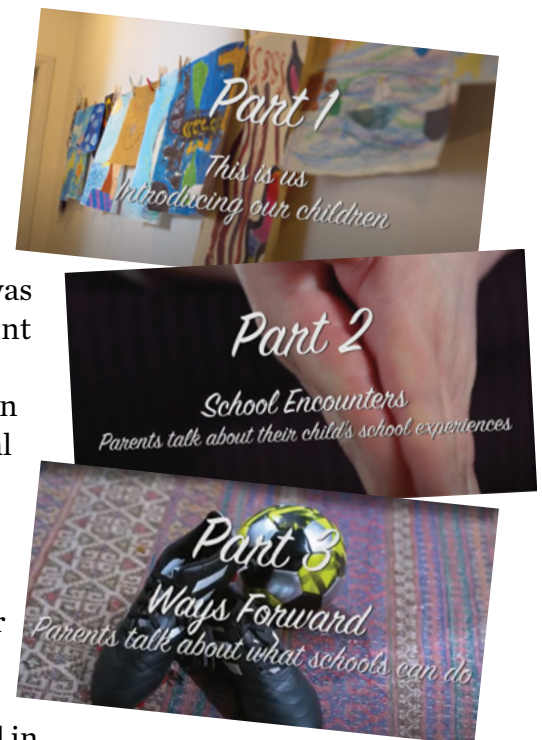
This research also included a survey component which resulted in nationally representative findings about the attitudes of Australian public-school parents towards gender and sexuality diversity-inclusive curriculum. Notably, over 80% of parents want gender and sexuality diversity included in primary and secondary public-school education, delivered in age-appropriate ways.¹³ Interviews and forum contributions with parents of GSD young people found that these parents wanted greater inclusion, visibility, and education around these topics for the wellbeing of their child. The film/playscript centres on their experiences.

Part 1 of the film/playscript demonstrated how the parents' narratives about their GSD child differed across schools. The parents' voices illustrated that their child's 'coming out' was an emotional and, at times, challenging experience, both for the young person and their parents. As educators, we need to consider how these experiences add another layer of complexity to the lives of GSD students and their families that is not necessarily experienced in the same ways by others in schools.

As a result, recall in the film/playscript how some parents talked about how some schools made accommodations to support their child at school. These accommodations included relatively small changes through to more significant adjustments. Some of the main accommodations for students/their families included:

- Helping with the social transitioning of the child;
- Reviewing classroom practices;
- Rethinking gender assumptions;
- Changing pronoun use;
- Making accommodations related to toilets and changeroom facilities;
- Making accommodations related to the school uniform; and,
- Increasing visibility of gender and sexuality diversity in the school environment.

There are other accommodations that you or your colleagues may have identified during your participation in this professional development module, particularly in relation to your school and your own practices as an educator. You were asked to consider what challenges could be associated with making these accommodations and how these might be overcome.



¹³ This link provides access to an easy-reading synopsis of the survey findings from the GSDS project, published in *The Conversation*: <https://theconversation.com/4-out-of-5-parents-support-teaching-gender-and-sexuality-diversity-in-australian-schools-176787>.

Review: Part 2. School Encounters. Parents Talk about their Child's School Experiences

In this section of the film/playscript, parents talk about their child's interactions at school with peers, educators, and the educational system. The bulleted list below summarises some of the experiences of schooling as reported by the parents in the film/playscript, including what worked well in relation to educator/school responses and what did not.

- Schools'/educators' reinforcement of 'traditional' masculine/feminine traits;
- Classroom/school activities which caused the child to be singled out as 'different';
- Bullying, teasing, and peer harassment;
- Schools' positioning social wellbeing as intertwined in education;
- Subtle and overt discrimination against GSD people/identities;
- Exclusion from classroom/school activities;
- GSD student support groups;
- GSD students' sense of belonging;
- Educators' provision of safe spaces for the GSD student;
- No appropriate resources (e.g., books addressing gender and sexuality diversity);
- Moving classes/adjusting student's timetable;
- Celebrating gender and sexuality diversity through *Wear It Purple Day*;
- Inclusive practices/education about GSD identities;
- GSD students finding supportive, like-minded peers;
- Reading GSD-inclusive books to classes;
- Problems with outdated name ("dead name") on enrolment forms and other administration;
- Reluctance to share information about GSD identities; and,
- Staff wanting GSD student's experience to be student led.

During your participation in Part 2, you and your colleagues reflected on these experiences in relation to your school and your own practices as educators. You were asked to consider what you do well in relation to supporting GSD students and their families and what you might be able to do better.

Review: Part 3. Ways Forward. Parents Talk about what Schools can do

In Part 3, parent voices from across the research have been amalgamated into the voices of the six mothers who participants met in Parts 1 and 2. Once again, participants are engaging with the actual experiences and words of parents of GSD young people. Parents make suggestions as to what they think schools/educators currently do well or what schools/educators could do differently or better into the future to support the educational and social needs of GSD students.

It is important to understand what parents want in relation to gender and sexuality diversity inclusions and to be aware of the importance of a supportive education for GSD students. In the research on which this film/playscript is based, Australian public-school parents overwhelmingly reported that they want policy, pedagogical practices and curriculum to include and support the emotional, physical, social and educational wellbeing of GSD children. Parents want children to be safe and supported at school. This research, which was nationally representative – meaning that findings can be reasonably assumed to be representative of the actual beliefs of parents – found that over 80% of Australian parents who have a child attending an Australian public school want gender and sexuality diversity addressed in the school curriculum at an age-appropriate level. Most parents want this to be included from Stage 3 (Years 5 & 6) onwards.¹⁴

Importantly, other large-scale research with Australian students shows that having a formalised commitment to supporting the safety and wellbeing of GSD students, through inclusive policy and curriculum, greatly improves their sense of connectedness to school. There is now solid evidence that when schools do not have effective policy and support for GSD students, these students are more likely to be discriminated against, disengaged from school, and fail to thrive academically and socially. This research also demonstrates the importance of acknowledging, addressing, and teaching about the impact of homophobic and transphobic language, harassment and bullying in schools.¹⁵

The activities in Part 3 provided an opportunity to examine school policy documents, relevant state/territory policy documents, as well as pedagogical approaches and practices in relation to gender and sexuality diversity. In this section of the workshop, the following themes formed the basis for discussion. These themes were highlighted in *What Parents Want: Talking about Gender and Sexuality Diversity in Schools* and, particularly, what parents raised in Part 3 of the film/playscript.

¹⁴ This research is cited within the “Frequently Asked Questions” section of this document on pages 14–16. Additionally, the GSDS project website provides access to all related publications at: <https://westernsydney.edu.au/gsd/outcomes-publications>.

¹⁵ Recent research from the field is cited within the “Frequently Asked Questions” section of this document on pages 14–16. The *Free2Be...Yet?* research (Ullman, 2021) focuses specifically on school climate and outcomes for GSD high school students, and is available here: <https://healtheducationresources.unesco.org/library/documents/free2be-yet-second-national-study-australian-high-school-students-who-identify>.

Theme 1: Policy Impacting Practice and Communicating School Values

Research shows that curricular and policy inclusions have a significant influence on the wellbeing and academic outcomes of GSD students at school.

GSD students in schools with inclusive policies report significantly higher levels of school-based wellbeing, including higher school belonging and an increased sense that their teachers are personally invested in them.¹⁶

Theme 2: Pedagogy to Support Wellbeing, and Counter Bullying/Harassment

Australian research with GSD high school students shows a startling 93% of this cohort has heard homophobic language at school, with 37% of these young people reporting that they hear this language daily. Of those who reported peers using this language within earshot of school staff, merely 6% reported that school staff always intervened to put a stop to its use.¹⁶

While transphobic language was reported with less frequency, 71% of GSD high school students reported ever hearing such language at school. Nearly 57% of these students reported that their teachers never, or hardly ever, intervened.¹⁶

Theme 3: Social, Emotional and Physical Wellbeing

Research shows that GSD students engage more fully and feel more connected to school when they have an advocate at school and a sense that their educators are interested in their wellbeing.¹⁶ The promotion of a positive school climate with respect to gender and sexuality diversity – one that offers positive visibility, inclusion and celebration of GSD identities – has a critical part to play in the wellbeing of these young people at school.

Many GSD young people experience harassment and violence at or on their way to school. For instance, over 60% of participants in a national study of GSD young people said that they had felt unsafe or uncomfortable in the past 12 months at secondary school due to their sexuality or gender identity.¹⁷ Safety concerns are compounded for students who are gender diverse.

It is important to note that young people do not have to identify as GSD to experience harassment and discrimination; often young people are harassed because others assume that they are GSD. Homophobia, biphobia, transphobia and related bias-based discrimination are used to regulate individuals' gender expression and sexuality and to limit the options for, and experiences of, all people.

¹⁶ See the *Free2Be...Yet?* research (Ullman, 2021) for more detail, available here: <https://healtheducationresources.unesco.org/library/documents/free2be-yet-second-national-study-australian-high-school-students-who-identify>.

¹⁷ These findings come from the *Writing Themselves In 4* research (Hill et al., 2021), available here: https://www.latrobe.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/1198945/Writing-Themselves-In-4-National-report.pdf.

Theme 4: Curriculum

Most GSD young people hear little, if anything, about gender and sexuality diversity in the school curriculum. For instance, merely 6% of students reported that it was “definitely true” that they had learned about GSD identities during their health and physical education instruction at school. Less than one in ten (8.5%) reported that their teachers had definitively discussed diversity of gender expression.¹⁶

Additionally, GSD students in schools with a gender and sexuality diversity-inclusive curriculum and where teachers are reported to be positively oriented towards GSD individuals feel more connected to their schools and are more likely to report having an advocate at school.¹⁶

Nearly all school curriculum ignores gender and sexuality diversity. Instead, heterosexual and cisgender identities are normalised and omnipresent. This means that GSD young people are not represented, and therefore do not see themselves in the curriculum. This can have long term implications for the social, emotional, physical and educational wellbeing of GSD young people.

Part 3 activities included reflecting on your local school policies in light of the *Australian Student Wellbeing Framework* (see page 5) and your state/territory’s policy guidance for the support of GSD students. You and your colleagues were asked to identify ways that your school policies could be modified to enhance awareness, visibility and support of GSD students and their families.

Ways Forward

The checklist below provides suggestions that could be used to identify ways to be more inclusive of GSD students and their families into the future. It is important to include how these suggestions will be undertaken, by whom, and when. These ideas are not exhaustive; please feel free to add other ideas to the list.

Ways Forward: Checklist of Suggestions for Gender and Sexuality Diversity Inclusion

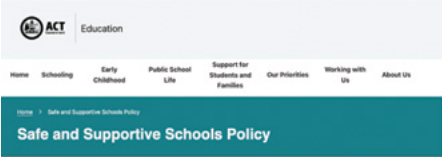





Suggestions	Who? When? How?
<input type="checkbox"/> Review your local school policy to ensure it articulates provisions for gender diverse students (including students who identify as transgender, non-binary, gender fluid and transitioning) in relation to uniform, toilet and changeroom options, as well as administrative facilities.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Critically evaluate (if available) or design and implement policy that specifically addresses homophobia, biphobia, transphobia and other related bias-based discriminatory language.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Implement practical and meaningful ways to educate staff and students to raise awareness, visibility and normalisation about gender and sexuality diversity.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Create a pool of teaching resources/ideas that are age-appropriate and inclusive of gender and sexuality diversity for teacher use.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Invite parents into the process of creating policy and resources.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Ensure parents are educated about gender and sexuality diversity.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Develop a staff/parent/allies committee in the school to generate ideas and support for GSD students, families and staff.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Identify ways that the school can create safe spaces/options for GSD (and other marginalised or vulnerable) students.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Identify one or more teachers who can act as a “Rainbow Coordinator” who will support GSD students, families and staff and advocate for their needs.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Report bias or inappropriate behaviours and respond effectively through education and monitoring.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Provide gender and sexuality diversity training for all staff, including teachers, executive, and administrative staff, as well as school nurses and counsellors.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Teach about equity and justice.	

Suggestions	Who? When? How?
<input type="checkbox"/> Ensure students are aware that educators will not tolerate bullying/harassment within either the classroom or the broader school environment. Educators must work as a team to consistently demonstrate this through classroom/school practices. School policy needs to support this work.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Critically teach about respect on a whole school level; integrate this into the everyday experiences of the school and its culture.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Establish a classroom climate where GSD students feel safe, both in terms of curricular inclusions and to report marginalisation from peers or adults in the school.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Encourage respectful conversation about gender and sexuality diversity and clearly outline the parameters of appropriate and inappropriate language to describe GSD identities.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Consistently demonstrate that gender and sexuality diversity-focused slurs or discriminatory language will not be accepted under any circumstances through education.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Use visual stimuli to indicate support for diversity in the classroom or other areas of the school (e.g., supportive posters, using a rainbow lanyard, etc.).	
<input type="checkbox"/> Use ‘teachable moments’ to educate about gender and sexuality diversity.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Integrate gender and sexuality diversity-related topics/ references in ways that ‘normalise’ gender and sexuality diversity, rather than making it a ‘special’ or ‘taboo’ topic.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Develop other more equitable ways of allocating students to tasks/activities than by binary gender.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Consider how your school will embrace GSD families in the planning of school events.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Ensure the availability of single-occupant toilets and changing facilities for gender diverse/transgender students who may wish to use these.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Acknowledge that transgender students often wish to use the communal facilities commensurate with their gender identity and ensure this occurs.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Ensure that all students receive inclusive, relevant and age-appropriate physical and sexual health information which is a right of all young people.	

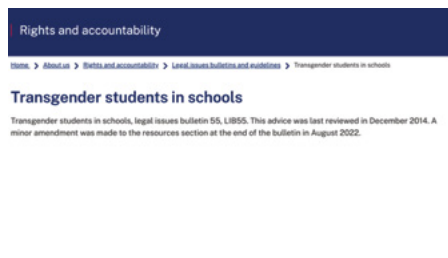
Suggestions	Who? When? How?
<input type="checkbox"/> Solicit, address, and work consistently to allay educators' concerns and fears about the parameters of relevant inclusions (e.g., which topics may be discussed, at which times and in what ways) and highlight the areas of the existing school curriculum in which there are clear provisions for inclusive material.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Refer to your state department of education guidelines and support documentation to assist you in making curriculum relevant to all students, including those who are GSD.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Other?	

The remaining pages of this resource list the state/territory government Departmentally-sponsored materials relevant to the inclusion of gender and sexuality diversity in public schools. We encourage you to engage to with the state/territory materials relevant to your location. You may also like to see how other states/territories advise their educators in terms of GSD inclusivity. Please also be aware of the federal *Australian Student Wellbeing Framework* discussed in the opening section of this Booklet, as a framework to guide educators' support and affirmation of GSD students.

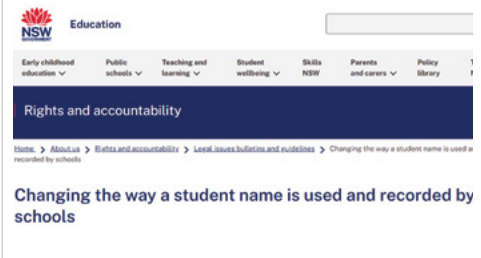
Federal and State/Territory Department of Education and Affiliate Policy Resources

Australian Capital Territory	
ACT Education Directorate	
<p><u>ACT Safe and Supportive Schools Policy and Procedure</u></p> 	<p><u>Changes to Dress Standards and Uniforms in Canberra Public Schools</u></p> 
<p><u>Dress Standards and Uniforms in Canberra Public Schools Policy</u></p> 	<p><u>Every Chance to Learn: Curriculum Framework for ACT Schools</u></p> 
<p><u>Fact Sheet for Schools Offering Students Equitable Uniform Options</u></p> 	
Safe and Inclusive Schools Initiative, partnership with ACT Education Directorate	
<p><u>Safe and Inclusive Schools Initiative</u></p> 	

Bulletin 55: Transgender Students in Schools



Use/Recording of Student's Name




NSW Teachers Federation*

Gender, Sexuality and Identity Policy



TR14 Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia



TR14.1 Introduction

This information leaflet is provided to assist members in dealing with and preventing homophobic, biphobic and/or transphobic behaviour, and is intended as an overview rather than a comprehensive document.

Homophobia, biphobia and transphobia have been identified as reasons why some people who identify as, or are perceived to be, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and/or queer (LGBTIQ) experience bullying, harassment, violence, discrimination and/or vilification. It can be the act of someone who is not consciously or intentionally acting in this manner, such as a passing comment or joke. On the other hand, it can be the deliberate act of someone to make another person uncomfortable, intimidated, hurt or injured such as name calling or graffiti.

Inclusion of Anti-Homophobia in School Bullying Program

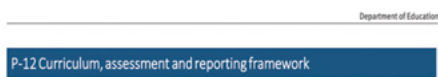


* Materials from the NSW Teachers Federation are not publicly accessible. Federation members will need to login in order to access the LGBTIQ+ Special Interest Group site (<https://members.nswtf.org.au/documents/lgbtiq/>) for access to these, and other, relevant materials.

Queensland

Queensland Department of Education

[Department of Education P-12 Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Framework](#)

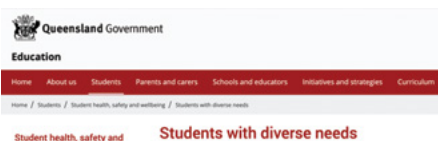


[Inclusive Education Policy](#)



Inclusive education policy

[Students with Diverse Needs](#)



[Diversity in Queensland Schools](#)

Diversity in Queensland schools Policy template



Queensland Human Rights Commission

[Trans @ School: A Guide for Schools, Educators, and Families of Trans and Gender Diverse Children and Young People](#)



True Relationships and Reproductive Health, independent non-profit organisation, linked from multiple QLD Dept. of Education pages

[Supporting Trans and Gender Diverse Students in Your School Community](#)



South Australia

South Australia Department for Education

Gender Diverse and Intersex Children and Young People Support Procedure

Gender diverse and intersex children and young people support procedure

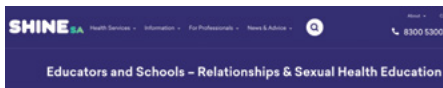
This is a mandated procedure under the department's operational policy framework. Any edits to this procedure must follow the process outlined on the [creating, updating and deleting operational policies](#) page.

Gender Diverse, Intersex and Sexually Diverse Children and Young People

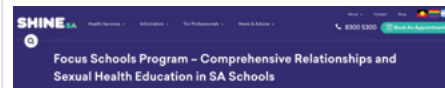


SHINE South Australia, working in partnership with the South Australia Department for Education

Education and Schools: Relationships and Sexual Health Education



Focus Schools Program: Comprehensive Relationships and Sexual Health Education in SA Schools



Northern Territory

Northern Territory Government

Student Wellbeing and Positive Behaviour Policy

Student Wellbeing and Positive Behaviour Policy

Policy

Teacher Registration Board's Code of Ethics



Tasmania

Tasmanian Department for Education, Children, and Young People

[Inclusive Language Guidelines](#)



[LGBTIQ+ Equality and Inclusion in Education](#)



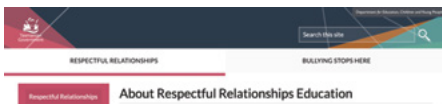
[LGBTIQ+ Equality in Tasmanian Government Schools](#)



[Professional Learning Institute: Affirmative Planning](#)



[Respectful Relationships](#)



[Supporting Sexual and Gender Diversity in Schools and Colleges Guidelines](#)



Working it Out, working in partnership with the Tasmanian Department for Education, Children, and Young People

[Working it Out](#)



Victoria

Victoria Department of Education and Training

[Guide to Making Your School Safe and Inclusive for LGBTI Students](#)



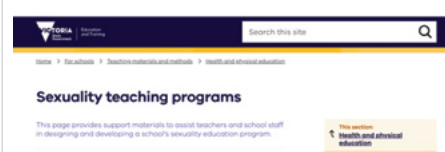
[LGBTIQ Student Support Policy](#)



[Safe Schools](#)



[Sexuality Teaching Programs](#)



FUSE, Curriculum Resources and Advice

[Catching on Early: Sexuality Education for Victorian Primary Schools](#)



[Catching on Later: Sexuality Education for Secondary Students](#)



[Resilience, Rights and Respective Relationships](#)



Western Australia

Equal Opportunity Commission of Western Australia

[Guidelines for supporting sexual and gender diversity in schools: Sexuality discrimination & homophobic bullying](#)



Commissioner for Children and Young People

[Supporting Trans and Gender Diverse Students in WA Schools](#)



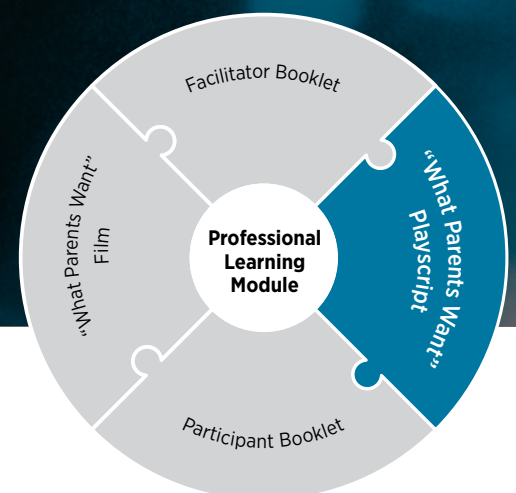
[LGBTI Children and Young People](#)



WHAT PARENTS WANT:

Talking About Gender and Sexuality Diversity in Schools

PLAYSCRIPT



Tania Ferfolja • Jacqueline Ullman • Tara Goldstein

© Ferfolja, T., Ullman, J. & Goldstein, T. 2023

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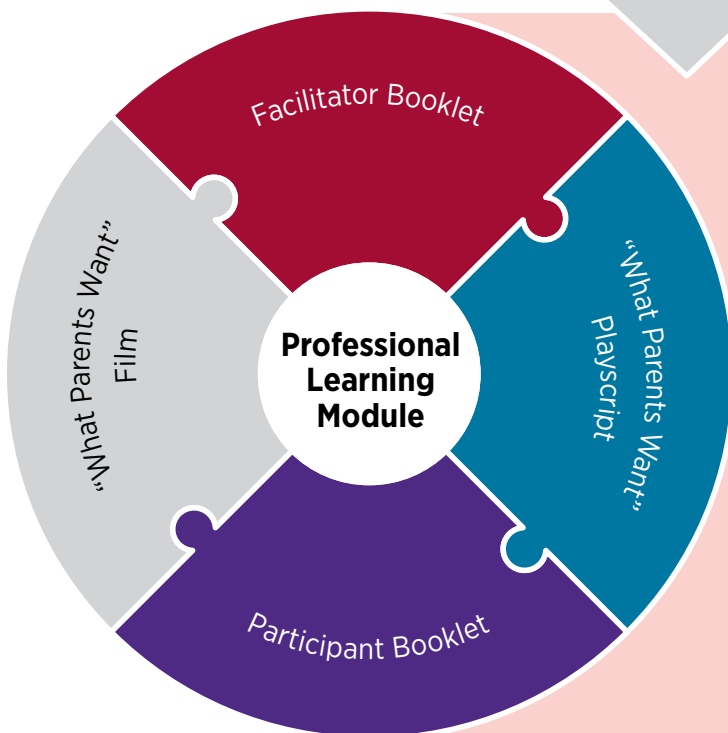
Ferfolja, T., Ullman, J. & Goldstein, T. (2023). *What Parents Want: Talking About Gender and Sexuality Diversity in Schools. Playscript*. Centre for Educational Research, School of Education, Western Sydney University, Penrith.

This play, like much of our work, is dedicated to all the gender and sexuality diverse young people who are trapped within systems that marginalise them, including schools, and to those we have lost in the struggle.

This Playscript is one component of a professional learning module for educators and is part of a broader package of resources developed as a result of the findings of an Australian Research Council-funded project titled, ‘Gender and Sexuality Diversity in Schools. Parental Experiences and Schooling Responses’ (DP 180101676). The diagram below details the various components of the research on which this professional development model is based and on the structure of the professional development module itself. For more information about the research, professional development module, or to contact the researchers, visit: <https://westernsydney.edu.au/glds>.

Components of the Research:

- National Survey (Public School Parents)
- Interviews (Parents of GSD Students)
- Online Forum (Parents of GSD Students)
- Performed Ethnography



Resources available on the GLDS website alongside the Professional Learning Module:

- State “Snapshots” (Survey Results by State/Territory)
- Printable/post-able project data infographics
- Open-access, peer-reviewed academic publications
- Validated instrumentation to measure parents’ attitudes towards inclusivity (“PATII” Measure)
- GLDS Research Report

WHAT PARENTS WANT: TALKING ABOUT GENDER AND SEXUALITY DIVERSITY IN SCHOOLS

Characters

Narrator

Mother of Asha (bisexual son)

Mother of River (gender fluid child)

Mother of Emma (transgender daughter)

Mother of Meg (transgender daughter)

Mother of Bridget (transgender daughter)

Mother of Jordie (sexuality diverse daughter)

Introduction to the play

NARRATOR

Welcome to *What Parents Want: Talking About Gender and Sexuality Diversity in Schools*. This is a verbatim play that draws on the findings from a research project that was conducted across Australia. The research investigated the experiences of parents of gender and sexuality diverse young people attending a public school across kindergarten through to year 12. As a verbatim play, it draws on excerpts from actual interviews and online forum data to form the play's script. The actors are using the words of some of the parents who participated, and as they were relayed to the researchers during data collection.¹

The research highlighted that gender and sexuality diverse kids come from a diverse range of families, including families living in cities, regional and remote areas of Australia; families where parents were born in Europe, Asia, Africa and the Americas and speak a variety of different languages at home; families where parents identify as Christian, Hindu, Buddhist, Jewish, Muslim and as not religious.

All names used in this playscript are pseudonyms.

¹ In Parts 1 and 2, the playscript is verbatim from the data of six parent participants. Part 3, however, is an amalgamation of the data from a range of participants which has been included into the voices of the six central characters to form composite characters. These adaptations were made so that the many ideas for improving school inclusion as expressed by parents in the research more broadly could be incorporated into the play.

What Parents Want: Talking About Gender and Sexuality Diversity in Schools is divided into three parts. Part 1, 'This is us. Introducing our children' introduces the audiences to six parent participants, all mothers, who talk about their child's experiences of coming out and identifying as gender and/or sexuality diverse. You'll notice the parents in this section all identify as mothers; most of the people who participated in the research were mothers. Part 1 will help viewers understand a little about these young people and their histories before hearing about their stories of schooling as described by their parent.

Part 2, 'School Encounters. Parents' talk about their child's school experiences', shares parents' experiences of the school system in relation to their gender and sexuality diverse child. In Part 2, we hear again from the same six parents who talk about their child's interactions with their peers and educators. We learn about what schools are doing well and what schools aren't doing well in supporting gender and sexuality diverse students.

In Part 3, 'Ways Forward. Parents talk about what schools can do', the parents talk about their ideas of what schools can do to support their child into the future.

We hope the play helps us all to better understand the schooling experiences of gender and sexuality diverse students and their parents, and to engage with the suggestions made by parents to ensure equity for all.

The words used in this playscript are those used by parents verbatim as they shared their journey with their gender and sexuality diverse child at a particular point in time. A core value of this project was to validate and centre their voices.

It is critical to acknowledge that language used in this space, particularly around identity, is rapidly evolving. Thus, some of the language used by parents to describe their child's experience at the point of project participation has also evolved.

As language can have a big impact on the wellbeing of gender and sexuality diverse people, viewers are encouraged to consult with local organisations who support gender and sexuality diversity to ensure that they are using the most appropriate terminology when working with young people and their families.

Some of the parents' narratives talk about children's self-harm and suicide ideation. If this play causes you distress, support is available through Lifeline Australia 13 11 14, or QLife LGBTIQ+ on 1800 184 527, or another counselling service in your area.

Part 1

This is Us. Introducing our Children.

MOTHER OF EMMA

Emma, who we're talking about today, is my transgender child. She was born male. Emma is nine. It was getting clearer that Emma couldn't keep pretending to be a boy and that's how she felt. She said that she thought it was a lie. She had all her girly things in her bedroom that if she had friends over, you'd have to put them all away. She didn't want to go out of the house because she'd have to get changed into boy clothes. So, it got to a point, at school, she really couldn't concentrate because she was so focused on presenting more like a girl. She had feminine mannerisms and was obsessed about what things were girl things and what things were boy things. She didn't want to go to the boys' toilets anymore and I was getting phone calls to say come and pick her up from school.

MOTHER OF RIVER

My child is River. They prefer the 'they' pronoun, which we're all struggling with a little bit because it's plural. River decided, or announced, they were gender fluid probably 18 months ago. They would have been 11 and a half at the time. River feels very clear that they're not in the wrong body, but feels that they don't feel feminine and don't like feminine things, and don't feel like a girl. So, River had this big, thick, beautiful, curly shoulder-length hair that was kind of like the thing that everyone knew them by. River decided that they wanted to shave it all off. So we shave it every six weeks. So, it's really short. It suits them. They look amazing. River's got a very androgynous body. Like they're tall, very lean. So they easily pass as a boy, or they pass as somewhere in the middle. Like they wear boy's clothes and is mistaken for male. With old people they will say, "Oh your son's so lovely!" Then you see them kind of going, wait, hold on, and just looking a bit confused and embarrassed. River just goes "Thank you" and moves on.

MOTHER OF ASHA

My son, Asha, is 15, nearly 16. Asha is slightly gender non-conforming, he's in no way gender-queer but he doesn't necessarily follow "the rules" in the way he presents, so he likes to wear women's jewellery sometimes and that kind of stuff. So, at some point he decided that he was bi. Heterosexuality hasn't been assumed as much in his entire schooling life as it certainly was for any of our generation. Every now and then, stuff that he says surprises me in terms of how different the attitudes are amongst him and his peers than they were for me and actually are for me now. Asha's always felt that he was a part of his school community, even if things weren't going terribly well.

MOTHER OF JORDIE

Jordie's just turned 14. So, she's about to head into Year 9 of high school. In Year 5 of primary school, I started to see some changes in her. She was showing interest in her body and in other kids. She hit puberty very early, at 10 years old, and so she went through rapid physical growth and emotional turmoil, really, because she was so young. She began to know a bit more about herself and so, at 11, she came out. She realised at that point that she was interested in girls. She was a bit afraid to tell her parents, my ex and myself, in case we were – probably just not going to take it seriously, I guess, because she was so young. We just said, you know, it's great that you're starting to understand this about yourself. Anyway, that vision of herself has never really changed and from that point she started to independently research sexualities and genders and became very, very aware. So, for example, at 12 she announced one night at dinner that there was a sexuality and gender type for each day of the month. So, there were 32 recognised ones at that point. She was doing all this independent research on her own.

MOTHER OF MEG

From my point of view, pre-transition there's Rory and post-transition there's Meg. By two and a half years old my son had rejected all boys' toys, rejected playing with boys, told us that he didn't like his body, wouldn't listen to his name or respond even to it. At two and a half he watched a movie called Frozen and the lights just went on. From that moment, it was just all girl stuff – dresses. The preschool at the time was very open but were very concerned if your child comes dressed as a girl every day, that other parents might be concerned about that. We were having tantrums – hour-and-a-half long tantrums if you put the shorts on.

MOTHER OF BRIDGET

I have twins. They are 14. They were both born male and then last year in October, one of my twins said to me that, I think that my brother is having gender identity issues. I asked my then-son, and he said, yes, I am. It was apparent that this had been bothering him for some time. He had been depressed and anxious and we didn't understand why for years. He then transitioned and became she. In December we chose her name, Bridget, with her, and she's now 14 and lives as a girl. Goes to school as a girl and yeah, is doing really, relatively well. She's on oestrogen now and so she's socially and medically transitioning. At 18 she'll have gender confirmation surgery.

MOTHER OF EMMA

Emma was adamant she was changing socially to a girl. She'd picked a name. She had been seeing a counsellor who'd given us some of the tools to cope with the change. The school was very accommodating because I think they could see that it got to a point for Emma that she couldn't continue. On the last day of school, she took off that school uniform and put on girl clothes and that was it. There was no stopping her. I'm guided a little bit by Emma, who is very happy in where she is right now. She feels that she's completely a girl. She goes to her friend's birthday parties and has sleepovers and in a way, I feel like at this point she doesn't want to be viewed by others as "different". Like, she does ballet out of school and she won't let me tell the other ballet girls that she's transgender. I do worry sometimes that it's not great, that going "under the radar" is how she's learned to cope. We do need to have something out there so that Emma can accept that being transgender is okay. Because right now, being transgender is okay only if no one knows you're transgender.

MOTHER OF RIVER

River felt quite confident that their friends would be okay about them coming out as gender fluid. They're all pretty bright, engaged kids, interested about the world, wanting to be doing the right thing kind of kids. So, we role played what River could say. River told the friends at school and they all jumped up and hugged River and said, "We love you" and "we're so proud of you" and "thank you for telling us". Just the cutest, most beautiful response ever, amazing and they're all like 12- and 13-year olds! Like it just makes me cry. I could not have wanted more. I'm so glad it went so beautifully for them. River's friends asked all these great questions like, "So, what pronoun should we use?" And "What about teachers? Do you want us to correct teachers if they use the wrong pronoun?" "What about other kids asking questions?"

MOTHER OF MEG

If we had just moved schools and she'd started as Meg that would have been a completely different story. But because she actually socially transitioned in kindergarten where all those kids know, it's now become a major problem for her. So, she has this secret that she has boy parts. Internally I think she's dealing with, "I have a secret. I'm not allowed to tell anyone. But everything in my school tells me to tell the truth. Then where do I live in that world?" Because at school in kindergarten it's all about telling the truth, being honest and sharing about yourself. So, she has a lot of anxiety about, "What if someone finds out and they tell the whole school? What will that look like for me?" Her first question all the time is, "Does this teacher know about me, Mummy?" She's constantly hyper vigilant about protecting herself at school. ...She's mimicking the girls to make sure she looks like them. So, dress-up days, mufti days, bookweek days, any day that you can imagine where they get to choose their own outfit is problematic, very problematic. Because, "If I look too girly what will that mean?" It's hyper vigilant, constant.

Part 2

School Encounters. Parents Talk about their Child's School Experiences.

MOTHER OF JORDIE

Jordie went into Year 7 maybe a little naively. So, in Year 7, she was quite open about sexuality. She had trust in her peers and so she was just engaging in that kind of talk in the way that all the kids are engaging in that talk. What I think shocked her was how people – her peer group – responded. So, in that first instance, she got called names by – particularly by the boys in Year 7, because she went into that whole year trusting, I mean she was just a kid so she didn't really think, oh, I need to protect myself or be careful about how I speak about myself. I think she wandered into that space expecting it to be all okay and it wasn't. So, that set up this low-level bullying, I suppose, and excluding, because she was this different kid. That escalated over time and so it's the subtle stuff of not being invited to parties, not being asked to do group assignments, not engaging with her at lunchtimes and things like that.

MOTHER OF MEG

It was very problematic for the school. They were not ready. So, we saw a paediatrician and the paediatrician had said to Meg, "You just be whoever you want to be". I had to actually do my own background work to be able to protect her in her transition. So, I went through the education legal bulletins and worked out what I was able to protect her with and what I could educate the principal on because she'd never heard of gender dysphoria which my child was diagnosed with. The first two terms the teacher had no idea about gender dysphoria. So, the kindergarten teacher, I was updating her constantly and I felt like I was doing the work – all of the work actually – to protect my child. So, educating the teacher, telling her – because they just had no idea what to do. There were no policies. They had no idea how to educate the rest of the school, the teachers, the kids in the classroom.

At Meg's older brother's school there is a big mural. They're very gay and very proud. In the secondary school it's very proactive. In primary, absolutely nothing. It's too scary. There's no books. I think the teachers in kindergarten tried to put in a book about a panda who didn't know who he was and there were parents complaining about that. There's nothing visual at all. There's nothing – there's no support groups. It's not talked about. It's almost like, well Meg's teacher said to me at a meeting, "I avoid talking about transgender stuff. I avoid gender dysphoria. I avoid anything to do with gender or the LGBTQ community because that is not my role. It is not my role to teach that. It is not my role in the school to teach other children about that. It's got nothing to do with me." I think that's probably indicative of a lot of teachers. It's just – it's not their role to teach gender stuff. That's the parents and doctors. It's got nothing to do with them. So, avoiding the topic at all costs is paramount.

MOTHER OF ASHA

Asha was bullied a lot in Year 7. The school did a whole gender thing in Year 7 actually, and they had masculine traits and feminine traits in columns and somebody else in the classroom said, “Asha, you’re right there in the middle”. He was sort of read as slightly gender non-conforming, for want of a better description, but only very slightly. As a result, he was a target for one kid in particular – it went on for six months and in the end, I went in to see the deputy and said “I have tried everything. I don’t know what else to do.” He said, “Yeah, that kid comes from an incredibly conservative background”; Asha clearly comes from a very progressive background. You couldn’t get two more opposed kids. He said, “If he’s not doing well socially, we’ll just change his class” and moved him out of that class on the spot. The fact that the school considers social wellbeing to be absolutely intertwined with education is critical. If you are not happy socially, if you’re not confident in your belonging, your sense of belonging, then you can’t learn. If you’re constantly on the defensive, how do you engage academically? Asha’s had issues, he’s had times when – socially – things weren’t working terribly well and that kind of stuff, but there’s never been a sense that he didn’t belong at that school.

MOTHER OF EMMA

Emma did eventually get to stand up and talk about how she identified and they’d read the “I Am Jazz” book which was one from our personal library and she’d taken it to school. They read it in Emma’s class and the two other classes that were from her year group. They also read it to Marnie’s – her older sibling’s class – because Marnie said the kids in her class also knew Emma as a boy and she was quite worried that they wouldn’t understand or accept what was going on. She didn’t want to be teased or have to explain it to every single person. The school was reluctant to put transgender education out to all the students, so it was really just Emma’s year group, which was Year 3 at the time, and Marnie’s year group – which was Year 5 at the time. I guess people talk, so it just evolved and I did not have a single parent have a go. It was universally accepted, wonderful comments from everyone. Great, really great.

MOTHER OF JORDIE

Jordie sought out at high school a peer group who was akin to her, if you like. Her group is young people who are exploring their sexuality. A couple of her friends are trans, identify as trans. A couple of them identify as homosexual or lesbian. So, the whole group is – they’ve kind of found each other. It’s a group of kids who are identifying quite diversely. The school itself does have a support club and that’s on a Friday. It’s very popular. However, Jordie is suffering with a lot of anxiety through feelings of exclusion, wider feelings of exclusion, so we’re going through a whole process of psychiatry at the moment and anti-depressant medication. This is because, even though there is the group, the wider impacts of the school – which is very heteronormative and cisgender – it’s actually had quite a negative impact on her. Rather than the school doing any kind of adjusting or addressing, it’s been, “Oh, let’s see if we can counsel Jordie rather than the school doing something different.” The outcome of that has been for her to go to the school counsellor, and then adjust her student timetable. So, last year she ended up with only half her grades. So, she’s a bright kid but she’s being – well, it’s like this thing of reducing rather than addressing the issues.

MOTHER OF ASHA

Asha has actually had a really good experience at school. When he started high school, his year advisor was also the rainbow advisor for the school and when we met him on enrolment day he complimented Asha’s blue hair, apologised for the fact that his was black at the moment and said “Don’t worry, it will be purple again soon!” [Laughs]. And like, Wear It Purple Day was the biggest event for the year; it was huge, it was a really big deal. They had awards for the best dressed and they made videos of it and kids doing cartwheels and dancing. They just made it incredibly celebratory – and, yeah, not serious. I think that that’s been the takeaway to me that I wouldn’t have thought about before, was just making it fun.

MOTHER OF MEG

I don’t think a lot of the teachers are aware of the impact of the little tiny daily things that the school does. For example, even the enrolment form – I know even last year Meg still had trouble when she logged onto the computer system because they set that up in kindergarten when they enrol. They set the login with her birth name. Every time she has a casual or a different teacher, her name pops up as “Rory”. So last time that happened she walked out of the classroom and went. She just went to her safe space. It was too much and too overwhelming for her to see her name up on the computer in front of everyone as Rory. Again, I think it’s just a systematic – there’s nothing in place for schools to understand what’s going on for these kids. Also, the peer social thing is really important – so when she feels like she’s being laughed at or identified, the emotional impact on her is overwhelming. She doesn’t know what to do with it. So, the last term of school she started self-harming at school in front of the kids. She’s eight. She’s in Year 3.

MOTHER OF RIVER

There was a child who transitioned in Year 6 at River's school. It was just handled so beautifully by the school. Like it was just the most perfect thing. They took the kids in her year and had a separate talk with them and just talked about what was going to happen. The child was going to come to school and she was going to have a different name and we're all going to try and use her new name. Sometimes we might make mistakes and that's okay because we'll just apologise and move on – like everything was handled so beautifully. I know with that there were lots of discussions about gender. That was when River was in Year 5, in a composite class of 5/6. So they got all the 5/6 kids together, that's right, and explained what would be happening with the child coming to school with a different name and in the girl's uniform and that kind of thing.

MOTHER OF BRIDGET

In January we wrote an email to the Anglican School that our child Bridget was going to and we said, this is the story. Our child is transgender and she wants to come back to school as a girl. The first thing they said was, they've never had a transgender kid at the school, which obviously cannot be true, given that one point three or one point five per cent of all young people these days identify as transgender². But that was their view. "We don't have the resources and facilities, particularly bathrooms and change rooms to accommodate her", which is also a false and ridiculous idea. She just wanted to use the girls' ones. Then they said, "And, in addition, we think it will be necessary for us to write a letter to the entire school, telling the parents that we've got a transgender child in the school. And as a consequence, there's a good chance that your daughter and your son will be bullied at school." I got off the phone and I talked to my husband. We were very, very upset. Because in a way, for us it was a kind of predictor about some of the discrimination that she might face in the world. The informal, implicit kind of discrimination involved. It wasn't like, well your daughter's going to be expelled, we're not having her. It was just they were doing everything they could to convince us that we should take her out because the unspoken fact was she's going to be – they'd make her – unwelcome in the school. We didn't know what to do. We were really struggling. She'd only been out a few months. She was of course struggling. So, we just sent an email to the school saying fine. We'll just take the child out of the school. That was January, in the first week of January and she didn't have a school to go to. It was massive for us.

² About 1.2 per cent of Australian school children are thought to identify as transgender (The Royal Children's hospital Melbourne, 2022). See: https://www.rch.org.au/kidsinfo/fact_sheets/Gender_dysphoria/.

MOTHER OF JORDIE

As my daughter Jordie built her identity of herself, she also learned how to trust or not trust the space. You know, how trustworthy it was or how dangerous it was for her. That was where the shutting down, I think, started to occur. So, whenever I've gone up to see the school – and I have done that from Year 7 and Year 8 – I've always said to Jordie, do you want me to talk about your sexuality? She's like, yeah, that's fine. I'm like, because I think we probably do need to talk to the teachers about this because I think it's actually part of the factor of the peer harassment. We have had the conversation and I said to the teachers, I need you to watch out for that not being a reason for bullying or exclusion or these micro-aggressions. I've been very clear with the teachers that they need to know who Jordie is as a student and what my expectations are that she should still have a safe and full education. There would be acknowledgement, certainly, on the part of the teachers, but the reality was nothing – and so the answer was, well, we have this LGBTIQ club on a Friday. They don't do things like Wear it Purple Day. They don't do that. They do allow students to wear small rainbows for Pride Month, but that's about it. So, it's really peripheral. When I have asked for stuff, they've kind of voiced an indication of support but it's just not embedded in the school.

MOTHER OF RIVER

River decided that we would go and speak to the year advisor, who's really lovely and I was confident – I had talked to him earlier in the year. He was amazing and had thought of every conceivable question and had answers to everything. Like what toilets do you want to use? You can use the disabled toilets. What about after PE when you have to get changed? You can use those toilets there, you don't have to use the change room. What uniform do you want to wear? Do you want me to talk to other teachers about it? Are any of the teachers dividing the class into boys and girls for lesson things? Just an amazing list of questions. He then made sure that their report card was gender neutral. He talked to all the staff members at the school. He said it was easier to just tell all the teachers in the school rather than just the teachers that had River because they're going to have them at some point, so it's just easier to just start off, tell everyone. A few teachers actually came and apologised to River because they had done class activities that involved splitting the class into boys and girls, and they realise now that that's not okay and they are not going to do that anymore and were really just so kind to acknowledge that they'd done that. A few teachers have made some – like misgendered them and have just apologised and moved on and it's not been a big deal.

MOTHER OF MEG

Teachers at Meg's school are doing what they can. So next year Meg's teacher is going to have a theme of rainbow through her class to try and – they are just doing the best they can with what limited information they have. The school does try to help Meg – they did a whole school dance musical with a rainbow theme. Meg was on stage for the first time in a ballerina outfit. She was so happy. So, I think schools are doing what they can. They're trying really hard to – I know Meg's teachers, they are aware that every decision they make will impact on Meg's mental health even if it's in 10, 15, 20 years. That's a big call. That's a really big call for a teacher to make.

MOTHER OF EMMA

There were a couple of incidents where the boys had been climbing over the cubicle because Emma wouldn't pee at the urinal standing up in front of everybody. She didn't want to go in there anymore because these kids were climbing over and saying what have you got, you got a big willy going on in there or something? So, she'd come home and do a giant wee and then she'd be fine. That was happening on a fairly regular basis so she was missing quite a bit of school because she couldn't pass urine and was getting stomach-aches and things from holding on. So, the school, I guess, were becoming more and more aware that this was a problem, because I'd talked to them about this toilet issue and other things like getting changed in the classrooms as they did for swimming lessons, she wouldn't do that. So, I said to them, can we get her into the toilets and get her changed there? Emma had said that she wanted to go to the girls' toilet and the school were a little reluctant initially, but I said that that was a law, that if somebody identified as that gender, then they were to go to that toilet, and I pointed out that it was more inappropriate for her to be going to a urinal with boys when she's a girl. That in a girls' toilet, all the cubicles have doors. There's toilet etiquette and you go into the toilet, you close the door, you come out, you wash your hands and you leave. So, when we discussed that, they became okay with it. Yeah, they told the boys about the toilet etiquette and they also let the parents know that there had been this incident. So, they individually spoke to each parent. Then the boys apologised to Emma and she accepted that that was okay. But from then on, she went to the unisex toilet, which is what they renamed the disabled toilet as. They actually took the sign off and put up unisex.

MOTHER OF BRIDGET

So, we went around networking as much as we could and asked people about a particular school. We sold our house and we moved because you have to be in the catchment area to go to that school. We rented a house and we got Bridget into school a week after school started in January. At first it went okay. The school has diversity as one of their slogans and they committed to trying to make it work. But very soon, she started being bullied. Like really, really seriously. So, for example, there were some kids that lived near us where we were renting. Year 9 boys. They were following her around at school, flicking up her skirt. Then when she was walking home from school, they'd come past on their bikes and push her over. When they were running at athletics, they would form a circle around her and just jostle and push her. In the corridor, they would shout across the corridor. I was reporting this to the school. But they weren't able to do anything. So, Bridget was actually becoming terrified and wouldn't go to school. I was trying to work, but I was having to drop her at the time the bell rang. Fetch her when the bell rang. And when I spoke to the school, they just said, "Look, you know, if your daughter will come and point to the pictures of all the relevant kids, we will deal with it." But she wouldn't because she was too afraid to do that because the kids live near us, like 50 metres away. They used to walk past our house every day to and from school. So eventually I just gave up and said, okay. We're going to look elsewhere.

Anyway, now, in this most recent school Bridget goes to karaoke club and the Deputy Principal goes along. And he sings with her and karaoke and so on. When I spoke to him about it, and I said, "Oh, thanks for doing that, it's really cool". He said, "No, I know, I need to show the other kids this is a good kid, and we're with her, and we support her". So, they very consciously show the extra support to a trans kid so that other kids know that the teachers know this child is trans, they are on her side. They're with her, they're looking out for her. And it's been a very significant thing for her, that he likes her, and he does this with her. She's not aware obviously of why, but you know, they make a special effort to align themselves with vulnerable kids. I think that's necessary in schools you know?

Part 3

Ways Forward. Parents Talk about what Schools can do.

NARRATOR

In Part 3, we include the voices of numerous other parents who participated in the research and amalgamate them with the six mothers that you've already met in Parts 1 and 2. We asked parents what they wanted to see happening in schools.

MOTHER OF EMMA

My state put together some resources that were supposed to be guidelines –

MOTHER OF JORDIE

I think they need to have a list of resources in school available to all the teachers.

MOTHER OF EMMA

They weren't guidelines; the way that they were framing it was like support for gender diverse children. The first thing that it talked about was that at the core of all of our policy decisions is the wellbeing of students. But then there was nothing that said how do you actually ensure the wellbeing of a trans child?

MOTHER OF MEG

My recommendation is we need policies in place. We need really strong, strict protective policies in place that protect teachers and the kids. I think that's the way forward.

MOTHER OF BRIDGET

Also teaching classes in university before the student teachers graduate!

MOTHER OF EMMA

Yeah – and what gets me is advising kids that calling another an anti-gay slur is against school guidelines is totally insufficient. “Why is it against school guidelines?” “How can it make another person feel?” and “What impact can it have on another person?” That sort of thing needs to be taught to teachers so that they in turn can communicate this to kids and lead by example – authentic example – not just an example of blindly following school guidelines to comply.

MOTHER OF BRIDGET

Schools could do more as a curriculum, not as like you've got a transgender kid, let's address this one person. They do stuff for culture, like I know they talk about Diwali and Ramadan, but I don't think that they identify that gender is also a broad thing and people have different genders and sometimes identify in different ways.

MOTHER OF MEG

When is the LGBTQ committee coming to schools? Where do they get a voice? Is there a committee at school? There should be one. Why don't we have an LGBTQ committee at the school? We have programs for ESL students. We have programs for – we have programs for everything else, but we don't even have a voice for parents of LGBTQ students – to come forward.

MOTHER OF RIVER

River got their period for the first time and that was really distressing. It was really hard to find information about kids who identify as gender neutral getting their period. Like there was stuff around transgender young people, but I kind of felt like there was a little bit of a gap there.

MOTHER OF EMMA

I've been thinking about how that's going to work out for Emma, because she's going to be given the pack with the tampons and the pads and she's never going to have any use for that. She's going to want to know how girls develop, but she's going to feel in this strange place.

MOTHER OF RIVER

That's probably been the biggest hurdle: the body changes. I don't feel like they've done much about it at school. I don't think they have talked about the difference between gender and sexuality or sexual preferences.

MOTHER OF BRIDGET

I think it should be compulsory in all schools that they have to have an LGBTIQ-focused term, where that's all they focus on in health and physical education. They get decent content and material. And the teacher who's running it must be trained in it, you know?

MOTHER OF JORDIE

I think there needs to be a trained counsellor employed in every school who understands the issues and has regular contact with the parents, not ad hoc.

MOTHER OF EMMA

I like the idea of schools having access to a ‘gender counsellor’ that they can call on for support if they need it.

MOTHER OF RIVER

Simply saying that you don’t support anti-LGBTQI activity is insufficient; educators need to understand and appreciate the complexity of what our kids are going through. The trauma that is involved to even be able to get to the point of coming out and then being expected to just get on with it amidst an environment of very little compassion is ludicrous. Our children are in a mental health crisis. Trans kids are 10 times more likely to kill themselves and gay kids are 6 times more likely³ – this is totally unacceptable. The changing of policy and guidelines is great but it’s not enough. There needs to be training on the emotional toll on our children and ways to foster inclusivity.

MOTHER OF JORDIE

What schools need to have across the board is annual, mandatory education – which they do currently for mental health – but they need to do this across this topic as well. I think anybody who’s in the teaching space has an obligation to know how to support these kids.

MOTHER OF MEG

I think the way forward is to not only educate the school staff and students but the broader community on the gender diversity that exists. Even if the school and educators are equipped and extensively trained in understanding and supporting gender diverse students, without bringing this understanding to the broader community and parents, bullying, discrimination and isolation will continue. Viewing gender diversity as an impairment only exacerbates the negative stereotypes and deficit viewpoint towards this group of children. Unless this view is changed from the top – through policy – to the bottom – within pedagogy and practice – our children will always be viewed as “outside of the norm” and treated that way.

3 “LGBTQA+ young people aged 16 to 17 were almost three times more likely to have attempted suicide in the past 12 months. LGBTQA+ young people aged 16 to 17 were almost five times more likely to have attempted suicide in their lifetime. LGBTI young people aged 16 to 27 are five times more likely. Transgender people aged 14-25 are fifteen times more likely” (LGBTIQ+ Health Australia, 2021). See: https://assets.nationbuilder.com/lgbtihealth/pages/549/attachments/original/1648014801/24.10.21_Snapshot_of_MHSP_Statistics_for_LGBTIQ_People_-_Revised.pdf?1648014801.

MOTHER OF JORDIE

From my experience a lot of support is left up to the teachers that are either LGBTQI openly themselves or those that are very supportive of the community. The support group in my child's school was set up by two gay teachers. I feel this is done from a level of support generated from personal experience – which is wonderful, however, I see no training in place for the other teachers.

MOTHER OF BRIDGET

I asked my child if they felt there was anything they would change at school and they said that they wished that teachers didn't separate things by gender for activities as they were always separated from their friends which made them upset and anxious. They really hate sport and Physical Education for this reason.

MOTHER OF EMMA

I wish they didn't separate kids by gender ever! Every school should have a neutral uniform option. No more gendered buckets for lunch boxes in kindy!

MOTHER OF BRIDGET

We need gender neutral toilets at every school; and not what I saw at my daughter's school recently – a big sign up near the loos near the front office saying "transgender toilets". I'm sure someone very well meaning put that up – but really?! It means anyone using the toilet is declaring to the whole school, "Hey everyone! I'm transgender!"

MOTHER OF MEG

I guess, it would have been nice for my child's teachers to know what to do, but in their defence, if they haven't had a transgender child before, it's hard for them to know. But it would be good for them to have the answers, not for me to have to go out and work out what my child's rights at school were. Of course, I did that, but not every child is going to have someone that will do that for them.

MOTHER OF JORDIE

I'd probably like some standard resources for the schools so that all schools got some books about that sort of thing that became part of that curriculum. We need cross-curricular inclusion of gender and sexuality diverse stories at all stages – this is not a scary or difficult thing! It just means that teachers need to be mindful of not just defaulting to stories with a white mummy and daddy and a girl wearing a dress and a boy kicking a football. There are so many different stories to choose from and to share with every kid in their care. Just give kids some choices and honour their choices without making a big deal of it.

MOTHER OF ASHA

At my son's school they've got posters all over the school. There was a rainbow notice board for stuff going on that's relevant. I would say that making it cool is probably the biggest thing. Straight up pride in having these students at the school, in celebrating the fact that they are here and that we're proud to call them our own, that this is part of who we are.

MOTHER OF EMMA

I gave my daughter's teacher some books that I thought could help; if the teacher just read the books to the class, they could help kids understand my daughter's experience. And they were age-appropriate books about just gender, they weren't even about trans kids necessarily, just describing identity and gender and stuff like that. She read one of them on the very last day of term. It was the most ambiguous book there was. So that didn't really help, but my daughter was happy, so that was really all that mattered.

MOTHER OF BRIDGET

Leaders and policy makers need to stand up to prejudice and hate speech. When the former Prime Minister says things about 'gender whisperers' and "letting kids be kids", it lets our gender diverse kids know that the PM – the most powerful person in the country – thinks that they are abnormal – or even that they don't really exist.

MOTHER OF RIVER

I think politics in Australia, unfortunately, uses the schools as fodder for their agendas. I think that's exactly what happened during the marriage equality vote. Like that would have been a great opportunity for the schools to change their tune and do some positive lessons about just general acceptance and wellbeing and all of that sort of stuff. It's all missed opportunities. You have teachers having to be the customer service agents of public opinion. That's not really what they're there for, so I feel like the government should stick up for teachers' ability to keep kids safe while they're in their care.

MOTHER OF MEG

It starts with the leaders in our educational fields better grasping the realities and equitable needs of our gender diverse children to ensure they have as many opportunities to succeed in life and employment as any other child.

MOTHER OF JORDIE

Don't confuse sexuality with gender expression, don't perpetuate misinformation about child sex changes, don't encourage stories about girls not being safe in school toilets – and stand up to people who do spread – and perpetuate – all of these misunderstandings. Be an ally and be assertive about it!

Final Word

NARRATOR

The researchers appreciate the time that you've taken to engage with the stories of these research participants and the experiences of their gender and sexuality diverse children. Thank you to all who have made a contribution to this research. We are optimistic that, together, we can make a positive difference to the lives of gender and sexuality diverse young people at school.

For an electronic copy of this playscript, and its associated professional learning module for educators, or for more information about the research on which this play is based, please visit the researchers' website.

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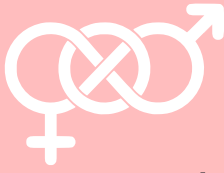
GSDS
GENDER AND SEXUALITY DIVERSITY IN SCHOOLS

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GENDER AND SEXUALITY DIVERSITY EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS



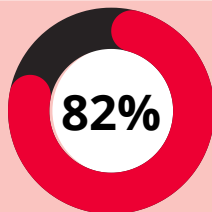
What is Gender and Sexuality Diversity (GSD)?

GSD people do not identify as heterosexual and/or cisgender. Some GSD people identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and/or queer (LGBTQ). The term GSD acknowledges the fluid nature of gender and sexuality, and includes individuals who choose not to label their identities.



What is GSD-Inclusive Curriculum?

School curriculum, teaching, and learning, which supports and values gender and sexuality diversity. 'Inclusion' is one of the primary principles within the Australian Student Wellbeing Framework;¹ However, many schools are still falling behind in the support of GSD acceptance.



More than 80% of Australian parents agree Gender and Sexuality Diversity should be taught in government schools.²



GSD students are often targets for discrimination

Despite increased national and international acceptance of such diversity, many schools continue to be marginalising environments for GSD students. 9 in 10 GSD students report hearing homophobic language at school and many report hearing it almost every day.³



"People should accept each other for who they are"

This statement particularly resonated with parents.⁴ Parents support GSD-inclusive education because they want schools to be accepting, equitable and safe environments, in line with the values included in Australia's *Student Wellbeing Framework*.¹

By and large, parents support inclusion whatever their identity or background.

Culturally and linguistically diverse parents are just as likely to support GSD-inclusive curriculum as other parents.



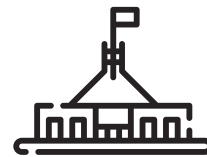
Nearly 70% of parents either "agree" or "strongly agree" that 'Providing Relationships and Sexual Health Education must involve a number of stakeholders (such as parents, schools, teachers and students).'⁵



Regardless of the age of their children, parents are equally supportive of GSD-inclusive curriculum.



While Labor and Greens voters are somewhat more likely to support a GSD-inclusive curriculum, over three-quarters of Liberal/Nationals voters (79%) want these topics introduced to students.



References:

1. Education Services Australia (2020). Australian Student Wellbeing Framework, Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment. Accessed from <https://studentwellbeinghub.edu.au/educators/framework/>
2. Jacqueline Ullman, Tania Ferfolja & Lucy Hobby (2022). Parents' perspectives on the inclusion of gender and sexuality diversity in K-12 schooling: results from an Australian national study, *Sex Education*. DOI: [10.1080/14681811.2021.1949975](https://doi.org/10.1080/14681811.2021.1949975)
3. Jacqueline Ullman (2021). *Free2Be... Yet?: The second national study of Australian high school students who identify as gender and sexuality diverse*. Centre for Educational Research, School of Education, Western Sydney University, Penrith. DOI: [10.26183/3pxm-2t07](https://doi.org/10.26183/3pxm-2t07)
4. Lucy Hobby, Jacqueline Ullman, Tania Ferfolja (2021). Parental Attitudes Towards Inclusiveness Instrument (PATII): Psychometric evaluation of a new instrument measuring parental beliefs about gender and sexuality diversity inclusions in schools, *Journal of School Psychology*. DOI: [10.1016/j.jsp.2021.02.008](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsp.2021.02.008)
5. Tania Ferfolja, Jacqueline Ullman, and Lucy Hobby (2021). Gender and Sexuality Diversity in Schools: Parental Experiences and Schooling Responses. New South Wales – Snapshot Report. Western Sydney University, Penrith. DOI: [10.26183/tmjr-zj59](https://doi.org/10.26183/tmjr-zj59)



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"HE WAS BEING PHYSICALLY ASSAULTED ON A REGULAR BASIS."¹



In schools where adults are often silent on topics related to gender and sexuality diversity, students who identify as being gender and/or sexuality diverse are more likely to be targets of discrimination and abuse.

"ANYTHING THAT THEY COULD DO, THEY DID TO HIM, TO DEMONSTRATE THAT HE JUST DIDN'T FIT."¹



School-based harassment negatively impacts gender and sexuality diverse students' education and opportunities and is linked to:



Decreased ability to focus at school



Mental health issues and self harm



School avoidance and truancy



Decreased feelings of school belonging and educational aspiration²

Despite increasing normalisation of gender and sexuality diversity in Australian society, schools persist as environments where gender and sexuality diversity is invisible and silenced.



Findings highlight the critical demand for teacher education and school support for gender and sexuality diverse students. A partnership between parents and schools is vital to facilitate inclusion.

References:

1 Tania Ferfolja & Jacqueline Ullman (2021). Inclusive pedagogies for transgender and gender diverse children: parents' perspectives on the limits of discourses of bullying and risk in schools, *Pedagogy, Culture & Society*. DOI: [10.1080/14681366.2021.1912158](https://doi.org/10.1080/14681366.2021.1912158)

2 Jacqueline Ullman, Tania Ferfolja & Lucy Hobby (2022). Parents' perspectives on the inclusion of gender and sexuality diversity in K-12 schooling: results from an Australian national study, *Sex Education*. DOI: [10.1080/14681811.2021.1949975](https://doi.org/10.1080/14681811.2021.1949975)

Parents under pressure: Findings from a national study of the parents of gender and/or sexuality diverse (GSD) students

Analysis of 123 online forum posts from parents of a gender and/or sexuality diverse (GSD) child identified six main ways these parents engage in additional labour as they navigate the schooling system.

1. Educating the Educated



Parents had to personally educate teachers and schools about GSD issues, as schools had little knowledge of how to support GSD children and often did not take the initiative to find solutions to problems exacerbated by their policies or systems.

2. Seeking External Support

Parents report that finding support for their GSD children is laborious, and often financially burdening. The Australian Psychologists and Counsellors in Schools Association recommend a 1:500 ratio of counsellors to school students.¹ However, no state meets this. In NSW the current ratio is 1:743.²



3. Checking In



Parents of GSD students report regularly 'checking in' to support and advocate for their child, through meetings, phone calls, emails and letters. This additional labour goes above and beyond what is typically required or expected of parents of school children.

4. Addressing Marginalisation and Abuse

Parents struggle with GSD students being held responsible for 'causing' victimisation by their peers, due to their visible or articulated differences. Parents would like to see schools take responsibility for teaching acceptance of diversity.



5. Dealing with Bureaucracy



Parents report experiencing schools' delayed responses to their requests for their GSD child. This was due to poor communication among staff and bureaucratic impediments.

6. Curriculum Surveillance and Monitoring

Parents report monitoring the curriculum and recommending inclusive content to protect their children, as framings of the body, gender and sexuality identity within the formal curriculum is often particularly sensitive for GSD students.



References:

1 Australian Psychologists and Counsellors in Schools Association (2021). Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Submission 8. Accessed from https://www.pc.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0015/241080/sub419-mental-health.pdf

2 Tania Ferfolja, Jacqueline Ullman (2023, under review). Australian parents of gender and sexuality diverse children: labouring through the schooling experience, School of Education, Western Sydney University

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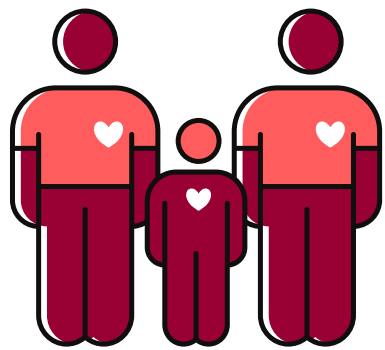


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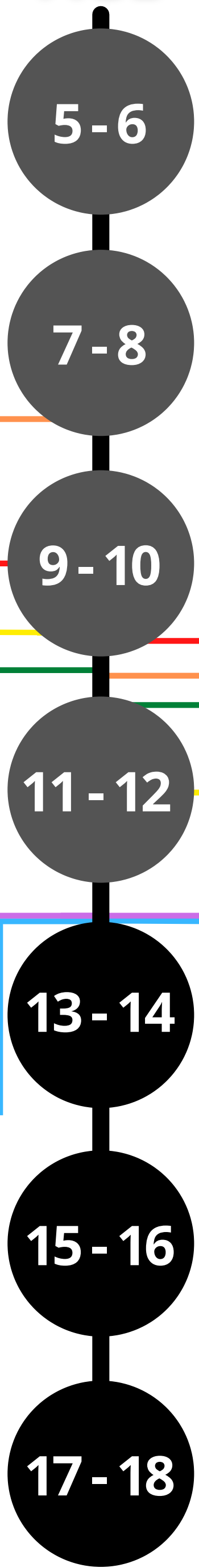
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When should Relationships and Sexual Health Education (RSE) curriculum areas be introduced to students?

Parents were asked when each of six broad content areas should be introduced to students, both with and without content including gender and sexuality diversity (GSD). Placement on the graph below shows the average schooling stage selected by parents (from Early Stage 1 to Stage 6), indicated by equivalent age.



AGE



"Discrimination/Bullying of GSD People" was the most supported GSD-inclusive content area, with **88%** of parents wanting it included in the curriculum. Of these, most (**60%**) wanted this content introduced to children during Primary School.

Discrimination/Bullying

Relationships and Families

The Human Body and its Development

Understanding Gender

"Understanding Gender Diversity" was the most divisive content area; however, **81%** of parents want this introduced as part of the curriculum.

Sexuality and Safe Sexual Behaviour

Sexual and Reproductive Health

This data showcases that the large majority of parents (**over 80%**) want all content areas introduced, both with and without GSD-inclusive content.

Most parents want this content introduced to students before they reach high school (ages 13-14).

GSD Relationships and Families

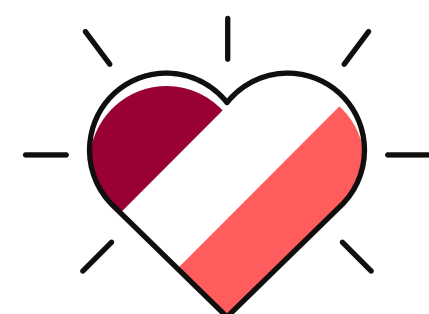
Discrimination/Bullying of GSD People

Understanding Gender Diversity

The Human Body and its Development for GSD People

GSD People's Sexuality and Safe Sexual Behaviour

GSD People's Sexual and Reproductive Health



Source: Jacqueline Ullman, Tania Ferfolja & Lucy Hobby (2022). Parents' perspectives on the inclusion of gender and sexuality diversity in K-12 schooling: results from an Australian national study, *Sex Education*. DOI: [10.1080/14681811.2021.1949975](https://doi.org/10.1080/14681811.2021.1949975)

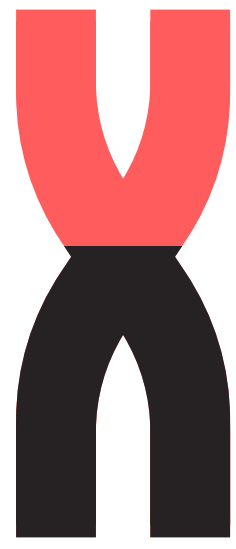
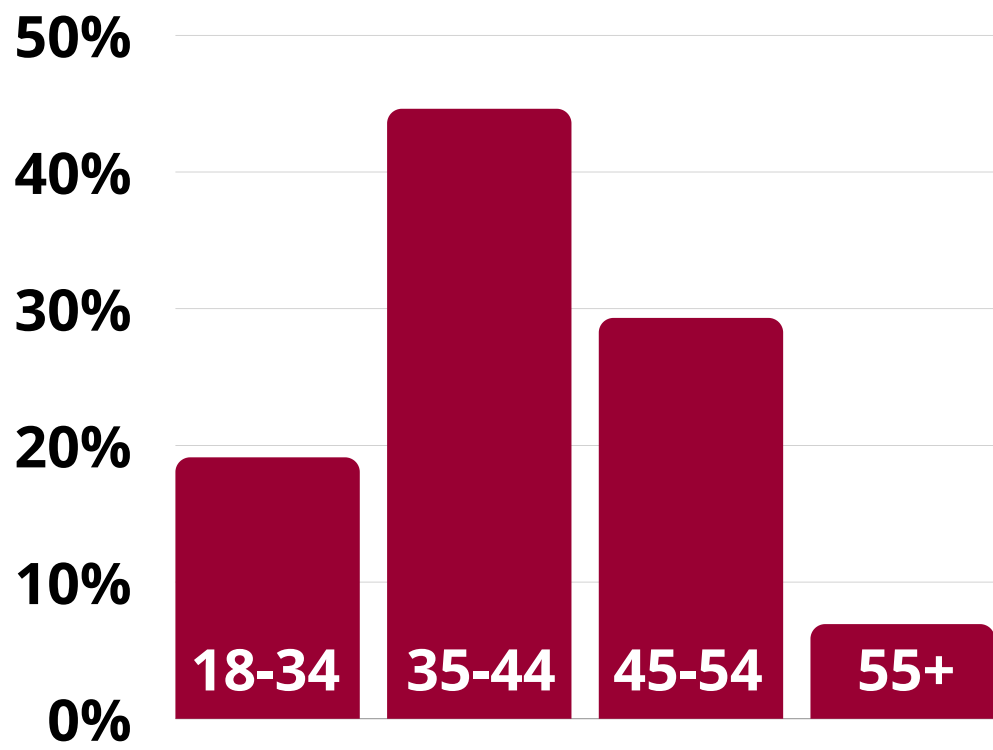
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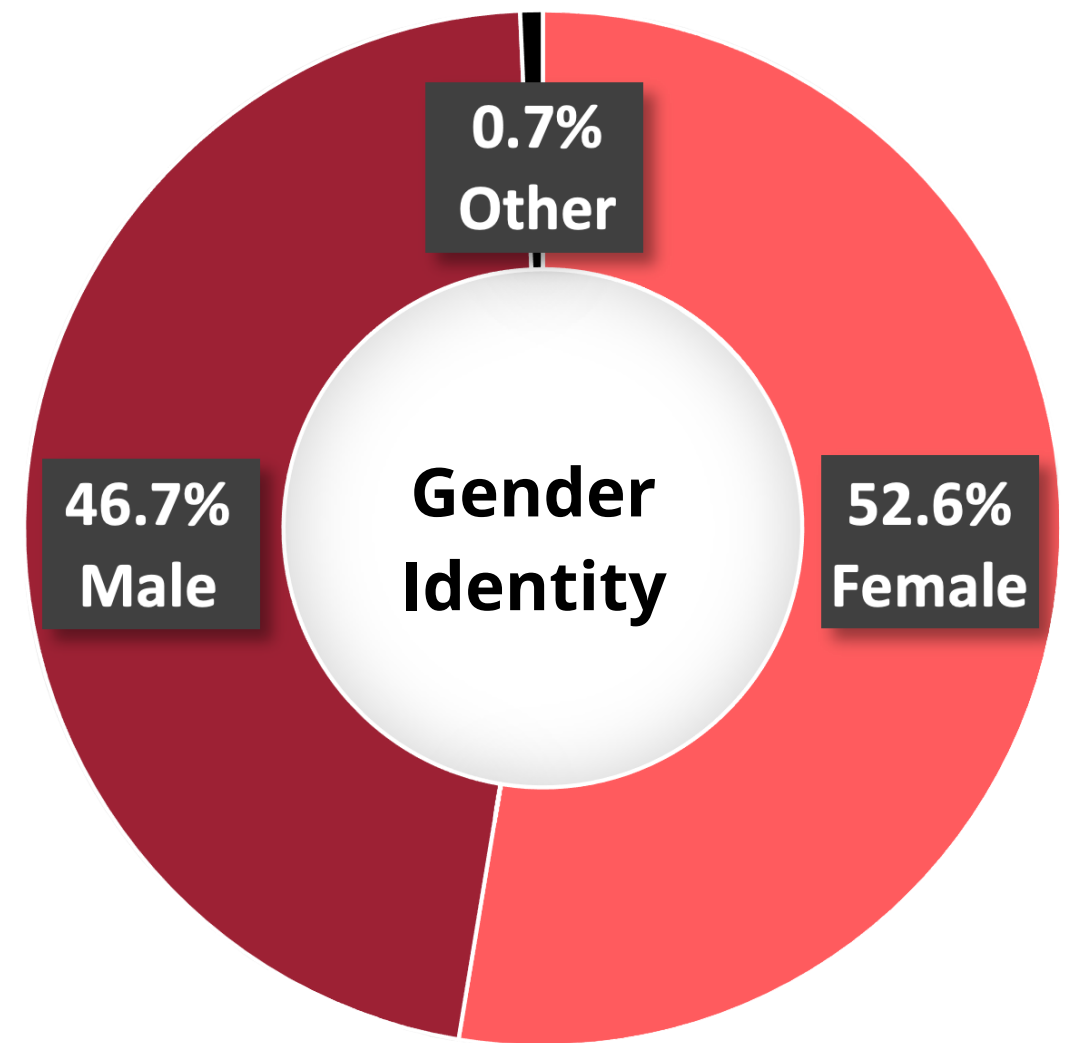
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Respondent Demographics (N=2093)

Age Distribution



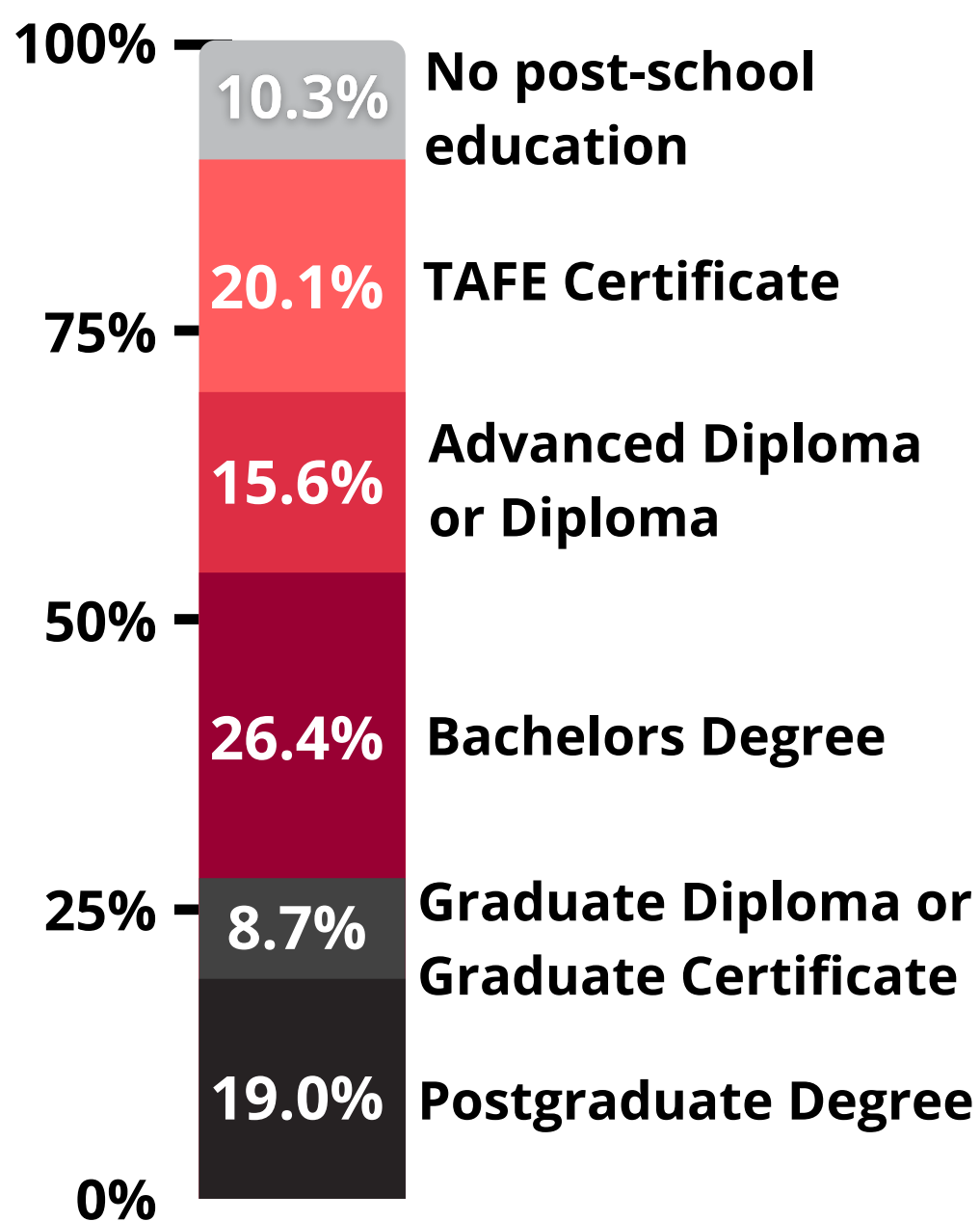
54.4% of survey respondents are part of Generation X (born between 1965-1979).



4.1% of respondents are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.



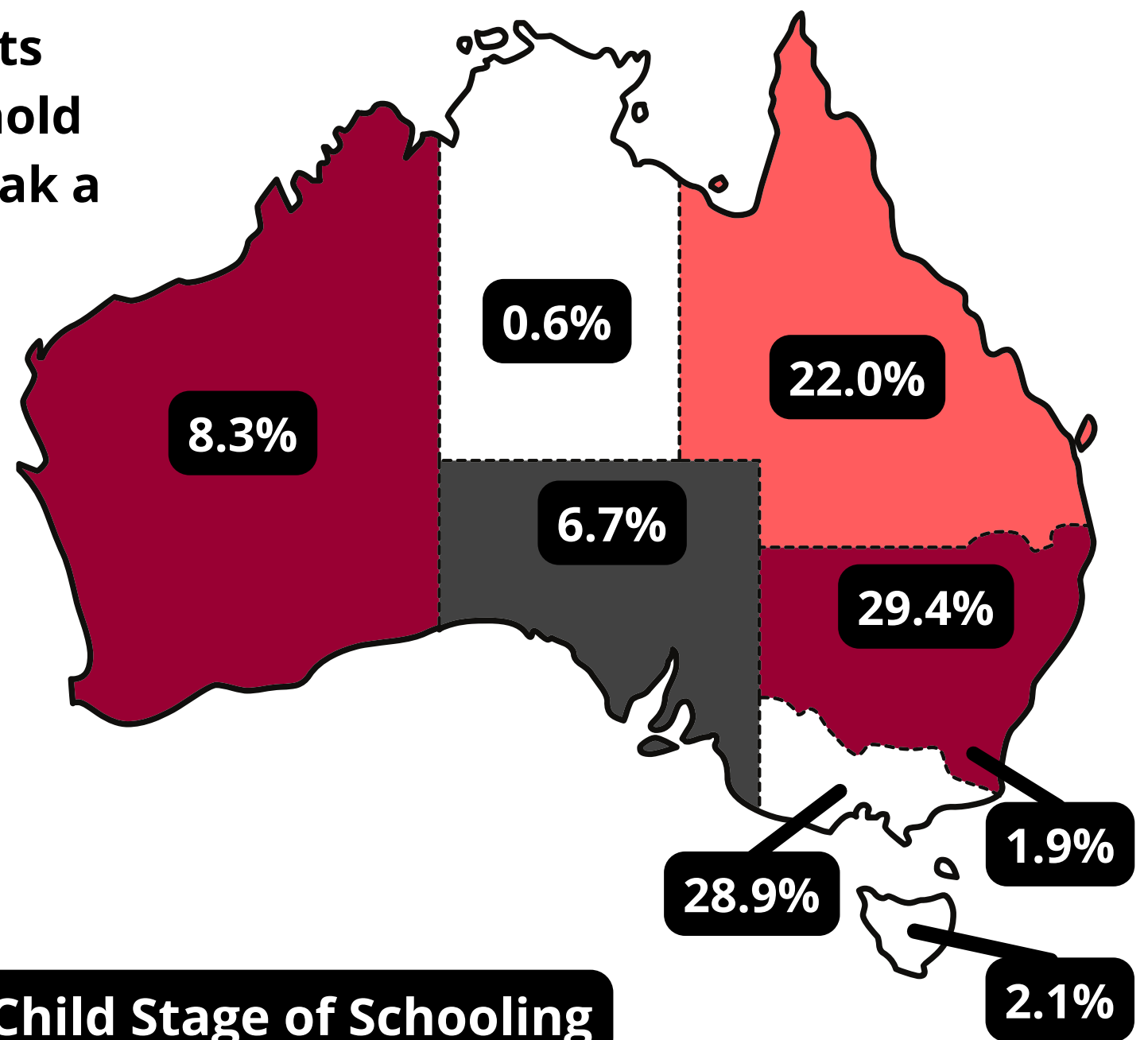
Highest Level of Education



29.2% of parents live in a household where they speak a language other than English.



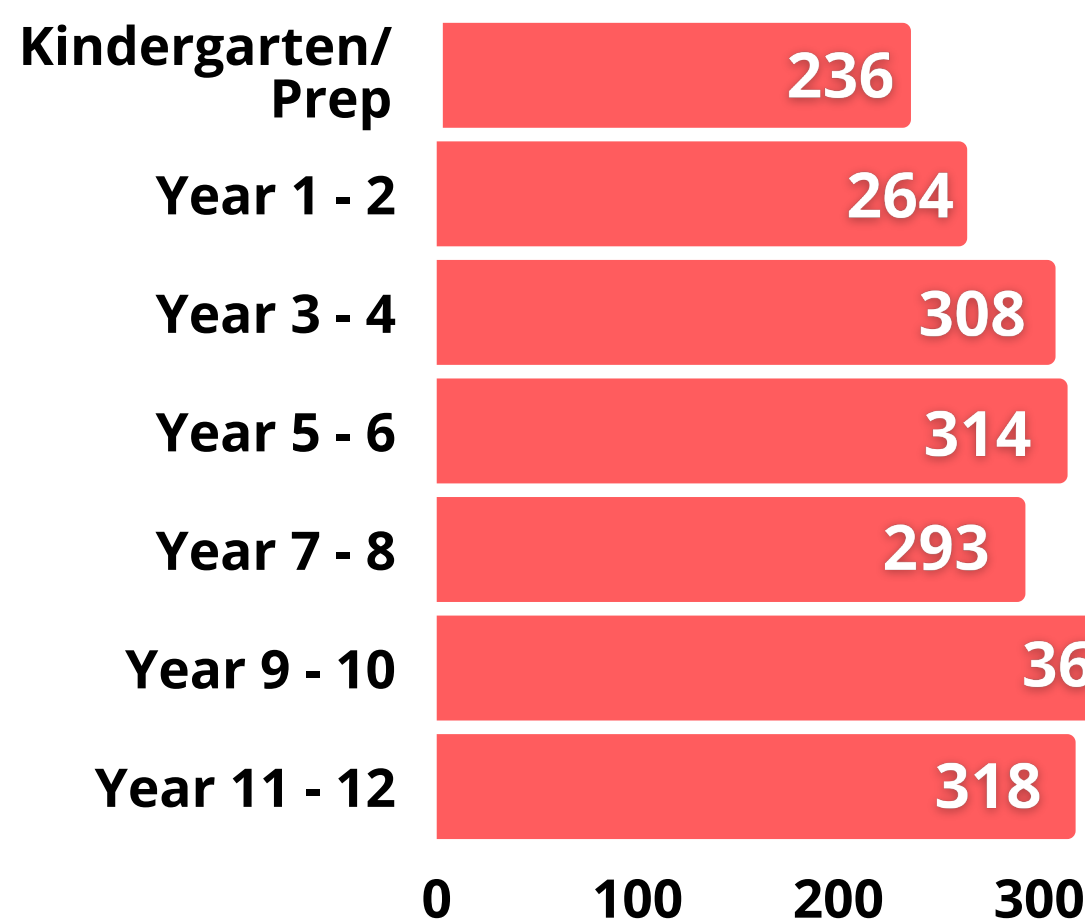
State of Origin



49.4% of survey respondents reported having 'no religion'. Christians made up 39.2% of respondents.



Oldest Child Stage of Schooling



All stages of schooling were represented, with the highest number of parents having children in Year 9-10, representing 17.2% of parents.



35.0% of survey respondents can be classified as being Culturally and Linguistically Diverse.