

9 May 2025

Hon Erica Stanford
Minister of Education
Freepost Parliament
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Parliament Buildings
Wellington 6160
By email: E.Stanford@ministers.govt.nz

Dear Minister

Re: draft framework for relationships and sexuality education

As organisations and academics working in the fields of health, safety, rights and education of young people, we are writing to express our opinion on the draft framework for relationships and sexuality education (RSE). We are deeply concerned about the exclusion of gender diversity.

High quality and comprehensive RSE is critical for young people. There is robust evidence that the skills and knowledge gained in RSE can have life-long and life-altering effects, whether in preventing sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and unintended pregnancy, or in developing healthy relationships. RSE helps young people gain critical knowledge about themselves – their changing bodies, emotions, identity, relationships with one another, and the world in which they live.

- We share a central concern that diversity of gender and sex characteristics are not adequately represented within this framework. It is disappointing to see that references to gender diversity and the difference between biological sex and gender are excluded entirely, and that intersex is mentioned only once and not until secondary school.
- Similarly, while some diversity of sexuality identities is acknowledged, they are defined in relation to there being only two genders. This fails to represent the identities and experiences of all young people in New Zealand.
- Young people in New Zealand are already aware of gender diversity, which is a normal part of their everyday lives – whether they are non-binary or trans themselves or have peers who are. It is incumbent on the education system to help young people gain a clear and rights-based understanding of gender diversity.

UNESCO's International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education points to the high rates of violence and discrimination that gender diverse people experience. Education engenders understanding and empathy. Comprehensive information about gender diversity will serve to reduce discrimination, bullying, and violence, keeping all young people safe at school and beyond.

We strongly advise the Ministry of Education to include this information on gender and sexuality diversity in the new curriculum. This will help to ensure all young people in New Zealand are able to learn about themselves and each other as they develop this critical set of life skills.

Signatories:

1. **Sexual Wellbeing Aotearoa** - Jackie Edmond, Chief Executive
2. **The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RANZCOG)** - Dr Sue Fleming, New Zealand Vice President
3. **New Zealand College of Sexual and Reproductive Health (NZCSRH)** - Dr Jo Lambert, Chair
4. **Rape Prevention Education** - Debbi Tohill, Executive Director
5. **Mental Health Foundation of New Zealand** - Shaun Robinson, Chief Executive
6. **InsideOut** - Tabby Besley, Managing Director
7. **Post Primary Teachers' Association (PPTA)** - Chris Abercrombie, President
8. **Tautoko Mai** - Julie Sach, Chief Executive
9. **New Zealand Educational Institute (NZEI)** - Ripeka Lessels, National President
10. **Sexually Transmitted Infection Education Foundation (STIEF)** - Olivia Hall, Executive Director
11. **The Light Project** - Nikki Denholm, Director
12. **RainbowYOUTH** - Amber Gribble, Interim Executive Director
13. **Women's Health Action** - Isis McKay, General Manager
14. **National Council of Women New Zealand (NCWNZ)** - Suzanne Manning, President
15. **Collaborative for Research and Training in Youth Health Development** - Dame Sue Bagshaw, Trustee and Educator
16. **New Zealand Prostitutes Collective** - Dame Catherine Healy, National Coordinator
17. **Positive Women** - Jane Bruning, National Coordinator
18. **Burnett Foundation** - Alex Anderson, Interim General Manager
19. **Dr. Katie Fitzpatrick** - Professor in Health and Wellbeing Education in the Faculty of Arts and Education, University of Auckland
20. **Dr. Rachael Dixon** - Senior Lecturer, School of Health Sciences, University of Canterbury
21. **Dr. Tracy Morison** - Associate Professor of Psychology, Massey University
22. **Dr. Darren Powell** - Associate Professor of Health Education, University of Auckland
23. **Hayley McGlashan-Fainu** - Senior Lecturer in the Faculty of Arts and Education, University of Auckland
24. **Dr. Analosa Veukiso-Ulugia** - Senior Lecturer in the Faculty of Arts and Education, University of Auckland