

Review of Appropriateness and Efficacy of the Safe Schools Coalition Australia Program Resources

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11 March 2016

Executive Summary

1. Five hundred and fifteen schools have become members of the Safe Schools Coalition Australia (SSCA). Membership does not imply an obligation to use SSCA resources. The material provided encourages schools to develop their own plan for choosing among and implementing the resources.
2. Many member schools have had an introductory meeting or training session for staff; a few have had training about the key teaching and learning resource *All of Us*; and no school is known to have implemented the whole eight-lesson program.
3. The four official Guides are consistent with the aims of the program and are appropriate for use in schools (that is: *Safe Schools Do Better*, *Guide to Kick Starting Your Safe School*, *Guide to Hosting Inclusive School Formals*, and *Guide to Supporting a Student to Affirm or Transition Gender Identity at School*).
4. The three official posters are suitable for display, especially in secondary schools. Display in primary schools would be appropriate, but the posters rely on terms and concepts that may not be familiar to primary school aged students. (that is: *Change is Coming*, *Discrimination Free Zone*, *What Are Your Plans for IDAHOT*)
5. The resource *All of Us* is consistent with the aims of the program, is suitable, robust, age-appropriate, educationally sound and aligned with the Australian Curriculum. It contains more material than would be likely to be used in most schools, and some material that individual schools and teachers would choose not to use. These choices fall within the range of reasonable teacher judgement and school policy.
6. The three resources created by young people, *OMG I'm Queer*, *OMG My Friend's Queer* and *Stand Out*, are not intended as classroom resources. They are not normally circulated to primary schools and in some states only circulated to secondary schools on request. They normally are available either in the school library or through the student support centre. They are suitable for use by individual secondary students but may not be suitable for use in some faith-based schools.
7. Schools should use their professional judgement about how *OMG I'm Queer*, *OMG My Friend's Queer* and *Stand Out* are used, and by whom, but some official guidance about the contexts in which they should be used should be available. Advice should also be provided to schools about the suitability of material on websites recommended in these resources, particularly on third party websites not designed for use in schools.
8. Schools are responsible for decisions about parental consent for membership or implementation of any of the SSCA resources. The SSCA network partners who are contracted to deliver the program in each state and territory, however, have views about effective practices in this area. These views should be reflected in some official guidelines about parental consultation and involvement. Consideration should also be given to providing specific guidance for parents of LGBTI children, which is a gap in the current set of official *Guides*.

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1. Context

On 26 February 2016 the Australian Government announced that there would be an independent review of the current resources provided to schools under the Safe Schools Coalition Australia (SSCA) Programme.

Specifically, the roles and responsibilities of the review are to:

- Advise the extent to which (the resources) are:
 - consistent with the intent and objectives of the programme;
 - a suitable and robust resource for school teachers and students;
 - age appropriate;
 - educationally sound; and
 - aligned to the Australian Curriculum.

and

- Review the extent to which parents and school communities are consulted about the use of these resources and the adequacy of such consultation.

2. The Safe Schools Coalition Australia Programme Resources

The Safe Schools Coalition Australia is a national coalition of organisations and schools, convened by the Foundation for Young Australians. SSCA has partnered with an existing organisation in each state and territory to deliver the SSCA programme: Sexual Health and Family Planning, ACT; Family Planning NSW; La Trobe University, Victoria; True, Queensland; WA Aids Council; Shine SA; and Working it Out, Tasmania. The Northern Territory provider is currently being finalised. For clarity, the organisations delivering services for SSCA are called *network partners* in this report.

Schools can become *members* of SSCA, by completing a form available at www.safeschoolscoalition.org.au/safe-schools. This form requires the school name, Australian Government Education ID number, the principal's name, email address and signature, a key contact name and email address, and the location of the school's main campus and does not oblige the school to any particular level of participation.

Organisations can become *supporters* by registering with one of the state or territory network partners. The SSCA website lists 95 supporter organisations which include

schools, teachers' unions, principals' and parents' organisations, universities, local government authorities and community health and advocacy organisations.

2.1 Official Resources

The SSCA website identifies eleven official resources: four sets of guidelines: the *All of Us* teaching resource; three resources written by young people; and three posters. They are as follows:

Guidelines

- *Safe Schools Do Better*, 12 page pamphlet.
- *Guide to Kick Starting Your Safe School*, two page pamphlet.
- *Guide to Hosting Inclusive School Formals*, two page pamphlet.
- *Guide to Supporting a Student to Affirm or Transition Gender Identity at School*, four page pamphlet.

Teaching resource

- *All of Us*, a 56 page teaching and learning booklet containing eight lesson plans, accompanied by seven short films (6:40 to 10:30 minutes) available either on a USB drive or downloadable from the SSCA website.

Resources created by young people:

- *OMG I'm Queer*, 36 page booklet, designed to provide advice to young people on "coming out as same sex attracted or gender diverse" (p. 4).
- *OMG My Friend's Queer*, 32 page booklet, a guide for people who have "a friend come out ... as same sex attracted or gender diverse" (p. 4).
- *Stand Out*, 36 page booklet, a "guide to challenging transphobia and homophobia" in schools (p. 4).

Posters:

- *Change is Coming*, one page poster announcing the formation of SSCA; no written content.
- *Discrimination Free Zone*, one page poster that says, "This is a discrimination free zone. Homophobia and transphobia will not be tolerated. K Thanks "(sic).
- *What Are Your Plans for IDAHOT*, one page poster, saying "Our school is celebrating IDAHOT" with hotlinks on the SSCA website to a three page pamphlet offering advice about running a school event to celebrate International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia and a hotlink to www.idahot.org.au.

The Guidelines documents were posted on the SSCA website between 22 October and 15 November 2015, the teaching resource *All of Us* was released on 15 November, and the three resources created by young people were released between 19-21 October 2015. At the time of writing, hard copies of *All of Us* and USB sticks containing video files and PDFs had been distributed to 196 Australian schools, signed up to the programme.

2.2 Additional Resources

A further 22 resources are available for downloading from the SSCA website, but were not produced under the national programme. These include fact sheets, booklets, videos and a poster. These unofficial resources are outside the scope of this review.

2.3 School Participation

More than 500 schools are listed as members of SSCA. According to figures provided by SSCA, the most common specific request from schools in the context of signing up as a member is for school staff training, followed by access to resources and help in supporting an individual student.

Network partners have visited many schools for introductory meetings with senior school staff and conducted whole staff sessions focusing on the needs of same sex attracted, intersex and gender diverse students. The proportion of schools that have had introductory sessions varies among network partners, from a high of over 90 per cent in one jurisdiction to as low as about 40 per cent in several other jurisdictions. This reflects the short time since some network partners joined the programme as well as some inter-jurisdictional differences.

Not all of the schools requesting support or resources from SSCA were members, but 196 schools have requested the *All of Us* teaching resource. As far as the state and territory network partners were aware, no school has implemented the full eight-lesson programme, five schools in Victoria have taught a sub-set of the lessons and one student leadership group in a New South Wales school has used some of the videos and lesson activities.

3. Process of the Review

A desktop review was undertaken of the complete set of eleven official resources, and two rounds of interviews were scheduled. The first round of interviews were with a small sample of schools registered as SSCA members. The purpose of these interviews was to discuss schools' motivation for becoming members, their views about the appropriateness of the resources provided and their views about parental consent and involvement. Principals of three other schools were interviewed by telephone and two schools were visited. Interviews were undertaken with principals and sub-school leaders, curriculum area leaders, health education teachers and students. A second round of telephone interviews was undertaken with SSCA national convenor and their state and territory network partners. SSCA and their network partners provided summaries of their contacts with schools, and SSCA provided project plans and evaluation plans. Public submissions were not sought and did not form part of the review process.

4. Aims and Objectives of the Safe Schools Coalition Australia Programme

The SSCA's aims are to (1) reduce homophobic and transphobic behaviour and intersex prejudice, and (2) increase support for same sex attracted, intersex and gender diverse students, school staff and families. The processes supporting these aims include building capacity of school communities, students and staff; sharing good practice; and building national awareness on these issues (see Exhibit 1, below).

Exhibit 1: SSCA Programme Aims and Objectives

Our program aims to:

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

This is supported by working collaboratively with school communities and other organisations and individuals to:

- Build the capacity of the whole school community to reduce homophobia and transphobia and actively include same sex attracted, intersex and gender diverse students, school staff and families in Australian schools.
- Build the capacity of students to lead and contribute to positive change in their schools to reduce homophobic and transphobic behaviour and actively include same sex attracted, intersex and gender diverse students, staff and families in schools.
- Build the capacity of staff to reduce homophobic and transphobic behaviour and actively include same sex attracted, intersex and gender diverse students, school staff and families in Australian schools.
- Build and share good practice, for both program delivery and within schools, to create safer and more inclusive Australian schools for same sex attracted, intersex and gender diverse students, school staff and families.
- Build national awareness and understanding about the need for positive change in Australian schools to improve the lives and experiences of same sex attracted, intersex and gender diverse people.

(Program Vision, Principles and Objectives, July 2015, p. 2)

5. Appropriateness of the Resources

This section of the review considers the suitability of each of the four sets of official resources: guidelines, *All of Us*, the materials prepared by young people and the posters. For easy reference findings appear in **bold**.

5.1 Guidelines

The *Safe Schools Do Better* guidelines document is directed at school staff and provides information about:

- the prevalence of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) students in Australian schools;
- research on the incidence and impact of homophobic and transphobic bullying;
- guidance on professional learning resources and support services available through SSCA; and
- advice on the steps schools can take towards building a safer and more inclusive school.

The information is predominantly research based and includes citations to the original research. No independent review of the veracity of the statistics cited in this document was undertaken.

In addition to this introductory advice, SSCA provides three short (2-4 pp.) documents. All four of the guidelines documents are available as a hard copy or PDF file from the SSCA website. There are no clickable hotlinks to other websites and the only website mentioned in these documents is SSCA's own website.

A short description of each of these documents follows.

- The *Guide to Kick Starting Your Safe School* is a two page pamphlet, suggesting eight steps that schools could take towards becoming “an inclusive and supportive place for same sex attracted, intersex and gender diverse students, school staff and families”: join the SSCA; get informed about the issues; raise awareness; speak up about homophobic or transphobic behaviour if it occurs; plan to teach diversity; review policies; find out about the current situation in the school using confidential surveys; and support student-led action.
- The *Guide to Hosting Inclusive School Formals* is a two-page pamphlet providing practical advice to schools about inclusive dress codes, policies on partners, the risks of discrimination, and event promotion. The *Guide* focuses on both of the aims of the program: reducing prejudice and increasing support for affected students.
- The *Guide to Supporting a Student to Affirm or Transition Gender Identity at School* is a four page pamphlet aimed to help schools support students through the process of gender transition or affirmation. The *Guide* identifies a series of issues that a school would work through if they had a student experiencing this transition. The *Guide* focuses on parental consent and the development of a

support team involving family members or carers, as well as some practical issues that may arise such as identity names and pronouns, use of toilets and changing rooms, dress codes, physical education, school events and school records. The *Guide* is predominantly focused on the second of the program's objectives: increasing support for students.

Findings:

- **The content of the four guidelines documents is consistent with the aims of the program, reducing homophobic and transphobic behaviour and intersex prejudice, and increasing support for same sex attracted, intersex and gender diverse students.**
- **The language and content is suitable for the teachers, parents and senior students likely to read policy documents.**

5.2 Teaching and Learning Resource: *All of Us*

The only direct teaching and learning resource among the eleven official SSCA resources is *All of Us*. This resource was created through a partnership with the LGBTI youth organisation Minus 18 and SSCA. It is a collection of eight lessons supported by seven short films. The programme aims to “assist students in understanding gender diversity, sexual diversity and intersex topics” (p. 3). Further, SSCA suggests that *All of Us* may be used beyond the classroom “as part of a whole school approach to challenging homophobia and transphobia and better supporting sexual diversity, gender diversity, and people who are intersex in the school community” (p. 3). These two purposes for *All of Us* are consistent with the broad programme aims of reducing prejudice and increasing support.

The *All of Us* teaching resource is explicitly linked to the Year 7-8 Health and Physical Education learning area of the Australian Curriculum. This learning area is organised into two content strands: personal, social and community health; and movement and physical activity. In the Years 7-8 curriculum there are ten content descriptors in the personal, social and community health strand, organised into three sub-strands: Being healthy, safe and active; Communicating and interacting for health and wellbeing; and Contributing to healthy and active communities. *All of Us* identifies the six content descriptions that are linked to the teaching resource (p. 9), and each lesson specifically identifies the content description that matches the lesson by Australian Curriculum item name and number. These are summarised in Appendix 1.

Lesson 1: Establishing a Safe Space

The first lesson in *All of Us* aims to establish a safe learning environment in the classroom, introduce the lesson sequence and provide advice about further information and support. The recommended activities would be familiar to most health education or pastoral care teachers. It includes a class discussion on respect for other people's thoughts and feelings, followed by a group activity designed to draft a set of class rules for discussions. This is followed by a teacher presentation on the meaning of the acronym LGBTI, the importance of using respectful language and an outline of the lessons to come. The lesson outline suggests that teachers might want to print out a list of agencies that provide information and support (p. 14). The list includes telephone numbers and website addresses. None of the web addresses is hot linked or clickable, either in the PDF version on the web or the printed resource. Whether or not they could be accessed from a school would depend on school Internet firewall policies.

Finding:

- **Lesson 1 of *All of Us* is consistent with the aims of the programme and the Australian Curriculum, suitable, educationally sound and age-appropriate for Year 7-8 students.**

Lesson 2: Same Sex Attracted Experiences

Lesson 2 is linked to the Australian Curriculum content description ACPPS079¹ and uses Jaimee's video to explore same sex attracted experiences. The main activity in this lesson is Stepping Out, an activity in which the class is asked to imagine themselves in someone else's shoes, and to explore how that affects their experience.

The Stepping Out procedure is to divide the class into two halves and ask both halves the same set of questions to which the answer is "yes" or "no". In this case students are asked to imagine that they are over 16 and one half of the class is asked to respond to ten questions as if they are same sex attracted and the other half is asked to respond as if they are opposite sex attracted.

All students are asked to stand up, and the teacher counts down from ten, asking students to sit down when the number corresponding to the number of times they answered "yes" is called out. The purpose of the activity is to identify the difference in experience for the two groups. In this case, student responses may show that more students would be comfortable inviting an opposite sex partner home than a same sex partner, or taking an opposite sex partner to a school formal than a same sex partner.

Following the video, the teachers' guide recommends a group discussion about how Jaimee defines her sexuality and what it means to "come out". In order to help students think through the experience of a person considering coming out, the guide

¹ Appendix 1 provides a table cross-referencing the lessons to the Australian Curriculum.

recommends an activity known as a word sort. This is an activity in which students are asked to arrange a series of printed cards in the order that they think would be the least difficult or most difficult: for example coming out to a teacher, or best friend, or holding hands in a school corridor with someone of the same sex, or going to a queer-straight alliance meeting at school (p. 23).

Although Stepping Out is a familiar classroom activity, teachers' views about its appropriateness were mixed. Some thought it quite appropriate. Others thought that it might be difficult for Year 7-8 students to imagine that they were same sex attracted. Further, it was thought that it might be uncomfortable for the last student left standing in the exercise, the student who answered "yes" to the fewest questions. Teachers in a school that included many students from conservative cultural groups thought that this might be a particular problem.

So, although the activities in this lesson are consistent with the aims of the programme and educationally sound in general terms, the Stepping Out activity might not be appropriate in some contexts. Teachers could reasonably be expected to make up their own minds about whether the activity was appropriate for their class and choose another activity if they had concerns.

Finding:

- **Lesson 2 of *All of Us* is consistent with the aims of the programme and the Australian Curriculum, educationally sound and age-appropriate. One of the activities might not be suitable in some class contexts, but this would be a matter for teacher professional judgement.**
- **Guidelines on the suitability of this activity in a range of contexts would support teachers' decision making.**

Lesson 3: Bisexual experiences

Lesson 3 supports ACPPS079 and ACPPS075 in the Australian Curriculum and begins with an activity for pairs of students. They are asked to imagine that they live in a world where "having teeth is considered really unpleasant" (p. 26) and consequently people with teeth try to hide them from friends, family and teachers. One of the pair is asked to talk to the other about their weekend without showing their teeth. If ever they fail to hide them, the other student is asked to say, "I can see your teeth". Students then reverse roles.

The next activity is for students to watch Vivian's video, an exploration of a young bisexual woman's identity. This is followed by activity on stereotypes in which students are asked to place themselves on an imaginary line in the classroom, with one end indicating strong agreement and the other end indicating strong disagreements. Examples of stereotypes given include "All people who have sexual or romantic experiences with someone of the same sex are gay."

Lesson 3 provides an engaging way for students to understand what it feels like to have to hide part of themselves, and is followed by a well-scaffolded whole-class, teacher-led discussion. Provided that the warnings offered in the lesson plan about ensuring that offensive or hurtful comments are addressed in the discussion, this is an educationally sound, familiar and age-appropriate activity, consistent with the aims of the program.

Finding:

- **Lesson 3 of *All of Us* is consistent with the aims of the programme and the Australian Curriculum, suitable, educationally sound and age-appropriate.**

Lesson 4: Transgender experiences

Lesson 4 supports Australian Curriculum content ACPPS070 and ACPPS071. The first activity “Aliens”, asks students to imagine that gender-less aliens have arrived in the classroom and their task is to help the aliens by making a list of “characteristics, hobbies, clothing and traits” associated with being male or female. The activity is undertaken in small groups, followed by a reporting back activity that allows the teacher to make a consolidated class list of supposed male and female characteristics. The teacher is then asked to explain that the headings on the list “somehow got switched” when they were given to the aliens, and then to lead a class discussion on the implications of this switch. Is long hair, for example, only associated with women? Has this changed over time? Are there some cultures in which men always have long hair, and so on?

The Aliens activity is a lead-in to the video of Nevo, a 17-year-old who identifies as transgender. Teachers are asked to follow the video with a discussion, and alerted to the possibility that students may want to ask questions such as what genitals Nevo has and whether he is able to have children. Teachers are referred to suggested responses for these frequently asked questions. After showing the video, teachers are encouraged to discuss the concept of homophobia, and then introduce the concept of transphobia, explaining that transphobia and homophobia are bullying and should not be tolerated. Next, teachers are encouraged to discuss a handout included in the resource that provides a visual summary of lesson content. Finally, there is a set of questions for homework or written classwork, consolidating the learning goals of the lesson including what it means to be transgender, how a person’s sexuality is different from their gender, and why pronouns are important to people who are transgender.

‘Aliens’ is a lively activity that would appeal to Year 7-8 students. It uses the concept of stereotypes that would be familiar to them from English or popular culture. The video tells the story of Nevo’s developing awareness that his gender does not match his sex assigned at birth. This complex issue is handled in an age-appropriate way in the video. The activities that follow are educationally sound – class discussion, summary handouts and written activities – but together with the Aliens activity and the video, this is a long and complex lesson.

Finding:

- **Lesson 4 of *All of Us* is consistent with the aims of the programme and the Australian Curriculum, suitable, educationally sound and age-appropriate.**

Lesson 5: Intersex Experiences

Lesson 5 is organised around Phoebe’s video, an account of a young woman with Androgen Insensitivity Syndrome, a type of intersex variation. It refers to Australian Curriculum content ACPPS072, ACPPS075 and ACPPS079. The lesson plan begins with a brief teacher input, where the teacher is encouraged to read a prepared text explaining that “What makes us look like we do depends on many things. Some of them are chromosomes, hormones, and tissue responses to hormones” (p. 36). The video follows and teachers are provided with answers to commonly asked questions such as does Phoebe have both male and female genitals, can intersex people have babies and is Phoebe transgender? The next activity is an “intersex jumble”, where students are asked to match questions (e.g., “How many people are intersex?”) with provided answers (“around 1.7% ...”). The intersex jumble is followed by a class discussion supported by a set of discussion questions and then a handout summarising the lesson content in visual form.

The teaching activities in this lesson are common in schools and age-appropriate. The content and language of the video is suitable, and matching questions with answers from a jumbled list is a common and appropriate activity. To achieve a deep understanding of the content of the lesson probably requires more background knowledge of the difference between chromosomes and sex hormones than Year 7-8 students would have from their school science programmes. Genetics is a Year 10 topic in the Australian Curriculum (ACSSU184) and hormones are not introduced until Senior Secondary biology (ACSBL113). The information in this lesson, however, could be followed without a technical understanding of the biological processes that underpin intersexual variation.

Finding:

- **Lesson 5 of *All of Us* is consistent with the aims of the programme and the Australian Curriculum, suitable, educationally sound and age-appropriate.**

Lesson 6: What Can I Do?

The focus of Lesson 6 is heteronormativity, described in *All of Us* as “a belief-system that reinforces that same-sex attracted, intersex, and gender diverse people are somehow less ‘normal’ than everyone else” (p. 42). It refers to Australian Curriculum content ACPPS071 and ACPPS079.

The first part of the lesson is a group discussion of the concept of heteronormativity, supported by some everyday examples: “asking new parents whether their baby is a boy or a girl; always asking boys if they have a girlfriend rather than a boyfriend or a boyfriend; telling a girl not to express herself in masculine ways because it is not lady-like” (p. 42). The second part of the lesson uses Jordan’s video to stimulate discussion of being an ally, someone who stands up for others and particularly for LGBTI people. Students are asked to work in groups to make lists of things “a great ally does” (e.g. “Respect their friend’s confidentiality”) and things “a great ally does not” (e.g. “Keep saying ‘That’s so gay’”) (p. 43). Finally, students are asked to pick some items out of these lists and make a Pledge including things they promise to do and things they promise never to do.

The concept of heteronormativity is an important underpinning for the key message in this lesson: that there are ways of being respectful of an LGBTI friend and ways of being disrespectful. Giving students the correct names for new concepts is important, but because the term is conceptually complex, this part of the lesson might need to be further developed. One approach would be through a discussion of the Greek and Latin roots in this concept (Gk *hetero*, L *norma*); another would be through a discussion of people from sport or popular culture who do not fit a heteronormative stereotype.

Although Year 7-8 students may not yet have encountered a friend who identifies as LGBTI, the idea of focusing students’ attention on what it takes to be an ally is age-appropriate because students at this age are very focused on friendship and group identity. One of the teachers interviewed for this review thought that the Pledge might be a step too far for some students, especially those from a family with conservative social or religious views on same-sex attraction. The lesson is, however, consistent with the formal advice in the Australian Health and Physical Education Curriculum that:

As with other areas of student diversity, it is crucial to acknowledge and affirm diversity in relation to sexuality and gender in Health and Physical Education. Inclusive Health and Physical Education programs which affirm sexuality and gender diversity acknowledge the impact of diversity on students’ social worlds, acknowledge and respond to the needs of all students, and provide more meaningful and relevant learning opportunities for all students.²

Finding:

- **Lesson 6 of *All of Us* is consistent with the aims of the programme and the Australian Curriculum, educationally sound and age-appropriate. One of the activities might not be suitable in some class contexts, but this would be a matter for teacher professional judgement.**
- **Guidelines on the suitability of this activity in a range of contexts would support teachers’ decision making.**

² www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/health-and-physical-education/structure

Lesson 7: Standing Out as an Ally

Lesson 7 refers to Australian Curriculum content ACPPS070 and ACPPS070. The lesson begins with watching Margot's video followed by a group discussion of content introduced in the video including the impact of pronoun use on transgender people and the impact of having to wear clothes to school that do not match their gender identity. Next, students are asked to complete an individual written activity, filling in a sheet with questions about their reaction to (a) a friend telling them that they are transgender and (b) a student who had recently transitioned from female to male being told by a teammate at PE to "Get lost and play in the girls team ...". Finally, for homework, students are asked to set an Ally Special Mission, identifying two things that they could do to be a good ally and prepare to report back on this the following week.

The activities in this lesson are familiar to teachers and students: watch a video, participate in a moderated discussion and complete an exercise sheet. The writing exercise is developmentally appropriate and structurally similar to many activities in schools that ask students to give their personal opinions on topics discussed in class. As was the case with Lesson 6, the Ally Mission Log might be more difficult for students from a family with conservative social or religious views on same-sex attraction. It is, however, consistent with the Australian Curriculum requirement that programmes "affirm sexuality and gender diversity [and] acknowledge the impact of diversity on students' social worlds"³.

Finding:

- **Lesson 7 of *All of Us* is consistent with the aims of the programme and the Australian Curriculum, educationally sound and age-appropriate. One of the activities might not be suitable in some class contexts, but this would be a matter for teacher professional judgement.**
- **Guidelines on the suitability of this activity in a range of contexts would support teachers' decision making.**

Lesson 8: A Safe School for All of Us

The purpose of Lesson 8 is to consider how homophobia and transphobia affect people negatively and to consider strategies to make schools safe for LGBTI students, staff and families. It focuses on Australian Curriculum content ACPPS072 and ACPPS079.

The lesson begins with Michael's video, followed by a discussion of Michael's experience of coming out to his friends and family. Students are then asked to work in groups to brainstorm school activities to make schools safer for LGBTI people. A two-page handout that identifies a variety of options, including Facebook pledges, joining SSCA, starting a Queer-Straight Alliance group, and putting up posters, supports the activity.

³ www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/health-and-physical-education/structure

Students are then asked to share their ideas with the class and consider the steps it would take to turn these ideas into reality. Teachers are reminded that permission may be required for some of the activities that students may identify. Finally, students and the teacher are asked to complete evaluation forms provided by the programme.

The video used in this lesson is effective, the activities are familiar and likely to be engaging for students and the level of language used in the lesson is appropriate. The concrete activity of writing up on the whiteboard the steps students would need to take provides a good wrap-up for the whole *All of Us* programme. The suggestion for students and teachers to complete a program evaluation at this point is appropriate. The lesson is consistent with both of the SSCA programme aims, reducing prejudice and increasing support for same sex attracted, intersex and gender diverse people.

Finding:

- **Lesson 8 of *All of Us* is consistent with the aims of the programme and the Australian Curriculum, suitable, educationally sound and age-appropriate.**

5.3 Resources created by young people: *OMG I'm Queer*, *OMG My Friend's Queer*, and *Stand Out*

The three resources created by young people, *OMG I'm Queer*, *OMG My Friend's Queer* and *Stand Out*, are addressed directly to young people and use informal and direct language. They are designed as individual information resources rather than a whole-class activity teaching and learning resources.

Policies about circulation of these three resources vary among state and territory network partners. Some network partners send a small number of copies out as part of the “welcome pack” to secondary schools. Others send them out with a request that schools review them before deciding to circulate them, or provide them only on request. Most network partners regard them as designed for use by individuals and unsuitable as a whole-class teaching resource. Two schools in one state have sought and been given whole class sets. No network partner routinely provides them to primary schools. If network partners provided them to primary schools it would be in the context of information for teachers or families who were supporting a particular student.

OMG I'm Queer and *OMG My Friend's Queer*

OMG I'm Queer begins with a one-page comment from a 19-year-old girl, focused on the issue of sex and gender labels. This is followed by comments from three people who have grown up queer in rural areas, a 15 year old, a 16 year-old and a 20-year-old. The focus is on the experience of coming out. This is followed by a series of short and more extended first-person accounts of coming out including an interview about the experience of “telling Dad” and the experience of coming out for a young Christian woman from a conservative religious background. The resource also provides advice about the risks of online dating and how to minimise the risks. A link to the Australian

Government online security site www.cybersmart.gov.au is provided. The final substantive piece concerns “partying”. Written from the perspective of an 18 year-old and in young people’s language it deals with the importance of having a plan about how to get home at the end of the night, the importance of drinking in moderation and eating food while drinking, the value of ambulance officers if things go wrong and the importance of not being pressured to get drunk. The last few pages of the resource include a glossary of new words (gay, lesbian, transgender, homophobia and so on) and two pages of printed website addresses of organisations across Australia. None of the websites are hot linked on the web or in the downloadable PDF version of *OMG I’m Queer*.

OMG I’m Queer would be most appropriate for use and circulation to individual students by teachers or members of the student welfare team. It is not age-appropriate in primary schools, and may not be age-appropriate in the early years of secondary schools. It would not be suitable for circulation to whole-classes of students, in either primary or secondary schools, because it is not designed as a classroom teaching and learning resource.

OMG My Friend’s Queer is also written in young people’s language. There are some general comments about labels and appearance written by young adults and a series of shorter and longer first person narratives and interviews. The narratives focus on sporty gay guys, the awkwardness of a same sex attracted person having a crush on a straight friend, the perspective of a person from a conservative religious community of having a friend come out as same sex attracted and the importance of gay or gender diverse people having support through the experience of coming out. It includes the glossary and listing of organisations that appears in *OMG I’m Queer*.

OMG My Friend’s Queer would be suitable for circulation by teachers or members of a student welfare team to students who are directly affected by this issue. The focus on issues for older adolescents and the reflections on these issues by young adults make it unsuitable for circulation in primary schools. One network partner regarded the graphics – pictures of student rowers, for example – as unlikely to be effective for students in rural and remote schools. Another network partner regarded the tone and language of *OMG I’m Queer* and *OMG My Friend’s Queer* as inappropriate for faith-based schools. Other network partners reported that these two resources were both popular and effective with secondary school students.

Findings:

- ***OMG I’m Queer* and *OMG My Friend’s Queer* are consistent with the SSCA programme’s aims.**
- **Schools should make their own judgements about the age-appropriateness and suitability of *OMG I’m Queer* and *OMG My Friend’s Queer*, depending on their specific school contexts and student needs.**
- **Guidelines for the use and distribution of *OMG I’m Queer* and *OMG My Friend’s Queer* would support schools’ decision making.**

Stand Out

Unlike the two *OMG* narrative resources, *Stand Out* is a guide to “challenging transphobia and homophobia” in schools (p. 4). It begins with some information about gender diversity, same sex attraction, homophobia and transphobia and provides some research about the proportion of students affected by verbal or physical homophobic or transphobic abuse, the proportion of these events that take place in schools and the proportion of Australians who are same sex attracted, intersex, transgender or gender diverse. The statistics quoted are the same as those quoted in other SSCA official resources.

Stand Out invites students to take steps in eliminating homophobia and transphobia in their schools through a series of options that are spelled out in the pamphlet: putting up posters, getting people talking, using SSCA surveys to audit the school environment, updating school policies and changing the language used in schools (especially the colloquial use of “gay” as synonym for “bad”). It recommends the resources *OMG I’m Queer* and *OMG My Friend’s Queer*, forming a Stand Out group and it provides guidelines for events and fundraising. These suggestions are accompanied by six interviews with young people who have established Stand Out support groups.

This resource is consistent with SSCA’s two overall aims, reducing prejudice and increasing support, but is not designed as a classroom curriculum resource. Like the other resources in this group, it is suitable for use by older secondary students but not younger or primary aged students. Many of the suggestions made about action students can take would require permission of school authorities, but unlike the cognate section of *All of Us* (p. 51) it does not draw students’ attention to this issue. *Stand Out* provides a list of websites (many of which are network partners’ websites) and suggests that students check and if necessary ask why the school firewall blocks access to any of these websites (p. 18). With the exception of the official resources on the SSCA website, these websites are not designed as school resources, and they may contain third party links that are not suitable for young children, or for use in schools without direct adult supervision.

Findings:

- ***Stand Out* is consistent with SSCA’s aims and is suitable for use by older secondary school students.**
- **Users of *Stand Out* should be reminded to consult with school authorities about actions they plan to take within the school.**
- **Guidance should be provided about the potential content of websites listed in *Stand Out* but not designed for school use and third party links or material that may appear on these websites.**

5.4 Posters

The SSCA official resources include three posters which can be downloaded from the SSCA website or ordered through a school's local SSCA affiliate.

Change is Coming is a one-page poster announcing the formation of SSCA. It includes no other written content.

Discrimination Free Zone is one page poster. The text says, "This is a discrimination free zone. Homophobia and transphobia will not be tolerated. K Thanks "(sic).

What Are Your Plans for IDAHOT? is a one page poster, saying "Our school is celebrating IDAHOT" with hotlinks on the poster page of the SSCA website to a three page pamphlet offering advice about running a school event to celebrate International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia and a hotlink to the sponsoring organisation www.idahot.org.au.

The posters *Discrimination Free Zone* and *What Are Your Plans for IDAHOT?* would be more appropriate in secondary schools than primary schools. Both rely on understanding of the conceptually complex terms transphobia and homophobia, which are explained in the Year 7-8 teaching resource *All of Us*. Although no harm would come from displaying the posters in primary schools, they would be more appropriate for teachers, family and community members in primary schools.

Finding:

- **The three official posters are consistent with the intent and objectives of the programme and suitable for display in schools; two of the posters are more developmentally appropriate for secondary schools.**

6. The extent to which parents are consulted about the use of these resources and the adequacy of consultation

6.1 Schools' Perspectives

Schools consulted for this review had a variety of reasons for becoming SSCA members. Their reasons affected the support and resources they would seek from SSCA and the level of parental consultation that this would entail.

Two schools had joined SSCA to gain access to support for same sex attracted, intersex and gender diverse students but had decided not to use the teaching and learning resources. One of these schools had joined on the initiative of the school's diversity committee, having had excellent support in the past from a network partner. It was consistent with the school's values and ethos so they had joined without consulting the

school board. The other had not consulted the school board but had had no reaction – positive or negative – from parents of being identified as a SSCA member. There had been one inquiry from the local Member of Parliament, but none from parents or carers.

Two schools had joined in order to be sure that the school was a safe environment for a small group of sexually diverse students. In one school there was universal support from the school board for joining. In the other case, one school board member had expressed concerns, but the board resolved to support school membership of SSCA. Neither of these schools had used any of the SSCA official resources but both might do so in the future. Neither thought that they would have curriculum time to implement the whole eight lessons in *All of Us*. Neither intended to consult parents about specific curriculum resources, choice of which was a professional matter for the school.

One school had joined after hearing about SSCA at a regional network meeting, discussing it at the school's equity committee, hosting an introductory talk by the SCCA network partner's project officers and following up with a one-day professional development session for interested teachers. The next step will be to inform students' families. The school has not yet decided whether to use the materials but would be looking at integrating selected activities into their current human sexuality program rather than using the whole of *All of Us*. Because the school served a culturally conservative community, the school had already moved the human sexuality topic to Year 9. The school would not be consulting parents about specific teaching activities being added to the existing health education programme.

Finding:

- **Schools' consultation with parents and school boards was appropriate, and reflected the sub-sets of resources and services they intended to use.**

6.2 Network Partners' Perspectives

All of the network partners encouraged schools to communicate their membership in school newsletters and their intention to teach about same sex attracted, intersex and gender diverse students.

Network partners said that parental consultation issue was normally discussed at the first meeting with schools. Most network partners had developed sample text for these purposes, or had circulated text developed in particular schools. Some took the view that it was better if schools developed their own text, as part of their individual journey towards becoming a safer school. In either case, there is an opportunity for SSCA to support schools by producing and circulating more of this kind of material.

Some of the network partners had decades of experience working with parents in other health-related contexts. One of these drew attention to a gap in the set of official resources provided to schools: resources written specifically for parents in highly accessible language.

Findings:

- **An additional *Guide* should be prepared, outlining expectations for parent consultation by members and schools using SSCA resources and services, and providing sample documents for communication with parents and carers.**
- **An additional *Guide* should be prepared, providing general information for parents and carers as well as specific information for those with same sex attracted, intersex and gender diverse children.**

7. Summary and Conclusions

The final section of this review briefly considers each of the elements of the terms of reference and draws on the findings to comment on the adequacy of the official resources.

The review does not consider the contents of the Minus 18 website, or the contents of the network partners' websites, as these are not official resources endorsed by the Foundation for Young Australians, the national convenor of Safe Schools Coalition Australia. There may, however, be material on some of these websites that would not be suitable for younger students, and material that should not be accessed from inside a school's Internet firewall unless it had been specifically approved.

7.1 Are the resources consistent with the intent and objectives of the programme?

All of the official resources are consistent with the intent and objectives of the program, in that they focus on one or both of the SSCA's two overall aims, reducing homophobic and transphobic behaviour and intersex prejudice, and increasing support for same sex attracted, intersex and gender diverse students.

7.2 Are the resources suitable, educationally sound, age-appropriate and aligned with the Australian Curriculum?

All of the lessons in *All of Us* are educationally sound, age-appropriate and aligned to the Australian Curriculum. Activities in three of the lessons (Lessons 2, 6 and 7) may not be suitable in all contexts, but their suitability falls within the reasonable range of teacher judgment. The lessons could proceed without these activities if they were thought to be inappropriate in a particular class, or modified to make them more suitable.

OMG I'm Queer and *OMG My Friend's Queer* are consistent with the SSCA program's aims, but the tone and language of the documents means that they are most suitable for older students, and for use by individuals. They are not teaching and learning resources so they would not be expected to relate directly to the Australian Curriculum or be used as a whole-class resource. They are not suitable for primary schools. Consideration should

be given to producing guidelines to support schools' decision making about the suitability and use of *OMG I'm Queer* and *OMG My Friend's Queer*.

Stand Out is consistent with SSCA's aims and is suitable for use by older secondary school students. Users of *Stand Out* should be reminded to consult with school authorities about actions they plan to take within the school. Guidance should be provided about the potential content of websites listed in *Stand Out* but not designed for school use and third party links or material that may appear on these websites.

The three official posters are consistent with the intent and objectives of the programme and suitable for display in schools. Two of the posters are more developmentally appropriate for secondary schools, but could reasonably be displayed in primary schools.

7.3 The Extent To Which Parents Are Consulted About the Use of These Resources and the Adequacy of Consultation

Network partner organisations and schools are all very conscious of the importance of consultation with parents and carers and school boards about potentially contentious issues. Responsibility for such consultation lies with schools, but some official guidance would be useful, outlining expectations for parent consultation by members and schools using SSCA resources and services and providing sample documents for communication with parents and carers.

In addition, consideration should be given to providing additional guidance for parents of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex students. This might usefully provide some general information about the SSCA services and resources, as well as specific information for those with same sex attracted, intersex and gender diverse children.

Appendix 1: Australian Curriculum Content Descriptions and *All of Us* lessons

		<i>All of Us</i> Lesson and Film							
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Being health, safe and active									
ACPPS070	Investigate the impact of transition and change on identities				✓	✓			
ACPPS071	Evaluate strategies to manage personal, physical and social changes as they grow older				✓		✓		
ACPPS072	Practise and apply strategies to seek help for themselves and others								
ACPPS073	Investigate and select strategies to promote health, safety and wellbeing								
Communicating and interacting for health and wellbeing									
ACPPS074	Investigate the benefits of relationships and examine their impact on their own and others' health and well-being							✓	
ACPPS075	Analyse factors that influence emotions, and develop strategies to demonstrate empathy and sensitivity			✓	✓				✓
ACPPS076	Evaluate health information and communicate their own and others' health concerns								
Contributing to healthy and active communities									
ACPPS077	Plan and use health practices, behaviours and resources to enhance health, safety and wellbeing of their communities								
ACPPS078	Plan and implement strategies for connecting to natural and built environments to promote the health and wellbeing of their communities								
ACPPS079	Investigate the benefits to individuals and communities of valuing diversity and promoting inclusivity		✓	✓		✓	✓		✓