



30th August 2024

**Women Speak Tasmania submission for the Inquiry into Discrimination and Bullying in Tasmanian Schools**

Dear Committee Members,

Women Speak Tasmania is a non profit organization advocating for women and young girls rights in the state of Tasmania, we welcome the government Inquiry into Discrimination And Bullying in Tasmanian schools.

We want to use this opportunity to inform you that recently WST was alerted to the content of a program delivered to teachers in public schools in Tasmania, the contents of this program were delivered by the lobby group Working it Out on behalf of the Department of Education, Children and Young people.

The slides from this program called "Supporting Sexuality, Sex and Gender Diversity in HPE " (which we attached to this submission letter) present serious instances of discrimination and bullying of young girls and teachers.

Slide 1.

## STUDENT VOICE: HPE THEORY

- Asking divisive questions and getting students to state if it is OK.
- In Year 7, the teacher said the only sexualities were straight, gay and bi. I mentioned asexuality and they said, "*Asexual is not real. It's a made-up thing.*"
- ~~The teacher described people with uteruses as women. I tried to talk to her about it afterwards, but she didn't change her~~ language or respond to feedback, so I had to keep on hearing it be said in future lessons for the rest of the unit. (*young person with a uterus who does not identify as female*)
- My HPE teacher told the class that HIV is not treatable and that it always develops into AIDS. I told them I know someone with HIV and the teacher immediately assumed it was a man (it's not) and said, "*He will die from it.*"

The Student Voice slide indicates that students have the right to dictate what language teachers must use to comply with 'diversity and inclusion' policies rather than language based on scientific facts and biology.

Gender identity laws in Tasmania are not widely supported in the community and promote a contested theory, a theory that should not be foisted on either teachers or students. Political lobby groups and students should have no role in compelling the speech of teachers and requiring them to use language that they may have a conscientious objection to and is anti-science. Calling women 'people with a uterus' is dehumanizing to girls and young women and could cause mental health distress.

There is considerable opposition within the school community but teachers and students are too intimidated to speak out about any coercion or bullying on these issues. Further the mandating of this type of training course discriminates against our culturally diverse community.

Slide 2.


## CHANGEROOMS

Consider whether changing is necessary or can be avoided.

Create a gender-neutral changing area with single stalls.

OR

When impossible, facilities can post the following: "People entering this facility deserve safety and respect. While this space may be labelled for a specific gender, harassment of any kind will not be tolerated."



The change to gender neutral change rooms should not be at the expense of young girls' opinions or their safety. The Department of Education is failing to acknowledge the need for single sex spaces but it also threatens students that any form of complaint is harassment.

WST in recent letters to Minister for Education Jo Palmer have stated we are NOT opposed to the building of gender neutral toilets and change rooms at schools as long as they are provided as a third option alongside male and female facilities which should remain in place.

We are concerned about the mental health toll on young girls who are being forced to share female only or gender neutral facilities with boys.

## Conclusion:

Based on the contents of these teaching materials, and complaints we have received from students and parents, we can only conclude that acts of coercion, bullying, threats of retaliation and harassment have become the norm for those who do not comply with the diktats being imposed on them. Far from being 'kind' and supporting 'inclusion and diversity', the roll out of gender ideology in schools, is nothing less than mandating a quasi religion, a religion, like all others, that has no place in public schools. A quasi religion that is founded on bludgeoning others into submission and conformity to a 'belief' system.

Students thrive when their needs are met in a truly safe environment for all. An education environment that encourages critical thinking, where proper boundaries are respected and where teachers are allowed to teach and impart their knowledge in a caring and robust education environment is essential.

We call on Committee members to conduct a review into the Department of Education, Children and Young People guidelines with regard to the serious concerns we have raised here. No child should be threatened for 'wrong think', or for asking questions, or be bullied for not being involved with queer school groups. This is happening in our schools across the state.

DECYP needs to better accommodate cultural diversity in its policy development and stakeholder consultations. DECYP should not be held captive by political lobby groups or bad laws. We also suggest that Working It Out no longer be funded by DECYP to deliver training packages to teachers, parents or students.

Yours Sincerely,

Dr Elizabeth Caballero Pastor (retired GP)  
Women Speak Tasmania