



Amy MacMahon MP
Member for South Brisbane



22 July 2021

The Hon Grace Grace
Minister for Education, Industrial Relations and Racing
Via email: education@ministerial.qld.gov.au

Sex, Relationship and Consent Education in Queensland Schools

Dear Minister Grace,

I am writing in regards to sex, relationship and consent education in Queensland schools. In March this year, your office announced a much-welcomed review into the Respectful Relationships program in Queensland schools. It is my understanding the Education Department has already consulted with 70 stakeholders in relation to this review, and has released some preliminary recommendations.

In addition to this, my office has collected 433 responses to a survey we ran on 'Sex, Relationship and Consent Education in Queensland Schools', primarily focussed on the views of young Queenslanders, aged 25 years and under. I have been really blown away by the responses, and want to share them with you as additional feedback to inform your office's review.

I launched the survey on 31 May 2021, posting it on social media and including it in my print and email newsletters. I closed the survey earlier this month. 433 people responded, 349 of whom were born in 1995 or later. I am writing to let you know about the responses from that cohort, because I advertised it seeking views from people aged 25 and under. I have also included a section in this letter about responses from older people, and have attached the entire dataset for your information.

Question 1: What schools did the respondents go to?

Of the respondents aged 25 and under, 57.6% went to a state high school. 20.63% went to a private high school. 12.32% went to a religious high school and 9.17% went to an independent state school. One respondent didn't answer this question.



Question 2: How did respondents feel about the quality of the sex, relationship and consent education that they received at school?

Less than 13% of respondents said the education was good or great: 1.72% of respondents said that it was great - detailed, relevant, thorough, sensitive and delivered in an interactive way. 10.32% said that it was good, covering some topics in detail, with some relevance, some sensitivity and some interactivity. 12.89% said it was neutral: neither good nor bad.

Unfortunately, **over 75% said the education they received was poor or very poor:** 44.99% said it was poor with limited detail, limited relevant content, limited sensitivity and limited interaction. And 30.09% said it was very poor, with no details, no relevant content, a lack of sensitivity and a lack of interaction.

As a regional high school student aged 17 said, 'All I'm saying is if Google didn't exist I wouldn't know anything.' A 22 year-old who went to a state high school said 'Not providing information or only teaching abstinence only leads to students not understanding safe sex or being victim to sexual assault because they were never taught about consent'. One 17-year-old at an independent school said '[The education] did not discuss what a healthy relationship looks like, should feel like etc.'

Question 3: Did respondents feel that the sex and relationship education they received at school covered consent?

53% of respondents said the education they received did not cover consent. 39.83% of respondents said it covered a basic approach to consent. **Only 7% of respondents said it covered an affirmative or communicative model of consent.** Of those young people who attended a state school (of which there were 201 respondents), 49.25% said the education they received did not cover consent. A former state high school student, aged 25, said 'Consent was never discussed. Healthy sexual relationships were never discussed. It was treated like a joke.' An 18-year-old respondent said 'Consent needs to be reiterated to the men A LOT.'

Given what we know about the importance of consent education and respectful relationships to people's wellbeing, and helping to change the prevalence of domestic violence and sexual assault in society, this really struck me. Extensive consultation with the Queensland women's sector tells me that they are asking for much



better investment in primary prevention of domestic violence and sexual assault, as well as stable funding for frontline services. Consent education in schools is a key plank in this primary prevention, and we are missing this opportunity.

Question 4: How did the respondents feel about how the sex, relationships and consent education they received at school affected their lives?

8.02% of respondents said the education they received was positive, providing them with the requisite knowledge to navigate safe relationships. 41.83% said it was neutral. **50.14% said the sex, relationships and consent education they received had a negative effect on their lives, not giving them the knowledge they needed to navigate safe relationships.** A 16 year-old student at a religious high school said 'As a gay teenager, I have received no information whatsoever from the school, except, in some cases, religious teachers suggesting it was not okay.' A 16 year-old at a state high school said 'As I have seen myself many don't know [about consent] which had detrimental impact on others'. One 22-year-old said '[I'd like to see education on] Sexual assault, consent, toxic relationships, lgbtq+ relationships, open discussions about the lgbtq+ community. If we had any of this information while I was at school I wouldn't have been in the situations I'd been in'.

Question 5: Finally, I asked respondents what information they would like included in sex, relationship and consent education in Queensland schools.

We received detailed, thoughtful feedback from respondents about what they think would be beneficial to in sex and relationship education in Queensland schools. I learned that young Queenslanders want the following included in sex, relationship and consent education:

- A focus on consent including boundaries, abuse, grooming and power imbalances
- Of the recipients who identified consent, affirmative consent was the preferred model
- Queer sex and relationships, outside of cis-het frameworks
- Sex with disability
- Safe sex
- Sexual health including contraception, urinary tract infections and endometriosis
- The emotional significance of sex in people's lives



- Emotional and physical pleasure
- For students in boys' schools and girls' schools, an understanding of mixed-gender spaces
- Body positivity
- The impact of pornography

A former high school student, aged 24, said 'I would like a much more in-depth framework that allows for the whole spectrum of relationships, what both green and red flags look like, what consent is and more discussion about female pleasure.'

Other respondents

I heard from 84 respondents aged over 25, ranging in age from 26 to 65. Exactly two thirds of this group said that their sex education impacted their lives negatively. 27.38% said it was neutral. 5.95% said it was positive for them. Nearly every single person said consent education needs to be improved, suggesting the following:

- A good understanding of healthy sexual relations, and knowledge of what consent means
- A pro-sex 'yes is yes' affirmative communicative approach to consent
- True and regular everyday stories illustrating the difference between conditions of consent

I have been amazed by the response to this survey, and the insightfulness of the responses. It is so clear to me, from analysing this survey, that sex education in schools is not equipping students with the knowledge they need to navigate sexual and personal relationships in their lives.

In particular, what young people have told me is that consent education in schools is simply inadequate. It seems to be barely covered, and does not talk about affirmative consent when it is. If we are to tackle sexual inequality, domestic violence and sexual assault in society, meaningful sex and consent education in schools is a critical next step.



Amy MacMahon MP

Member for South Brisbane



I look forward to news of the review into Respectful Relationships education, and what is planned for sex, relationship and consent education in Queensland schools. Please do not hesitate to contact my office on 3724 9100 if you would like to discuss this matter in more detail.

Kind regards,

Amy MacMahon
Member for South Brisbane