



Minister for Education and
Minister for Tourism and Major Events

19 MAY 2016

Mr Neil Laurie
The Clerk of the Parliament
Parliament House
BRISBANE QLD 4000

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Dear Mr Laurie

I refer to Petition 2552-16 tabled in Parliament on 19 April 2016 regarding the Safe Schools Coalition Australia's (SSCA) resources in Queensland schools.

The safety and wellbeing of Queensland students is my number one priority.

It is deeply concerning that 75 per cent of same-sex attracted young people are bullied and are six times more likely to attempt suicide. Furthermore, the Australian Human Rights Commission's research shows that 80 per cent of homophobic bullying occurs in schools. This is simply unacceptable and the Palaszczuk Government is committed to ensuring Queensland schools are safe and inclusive environments where all students can reach their full potential.

Unfortunately, some of the commentary around SSCA has been deliberately divisive and incorrect, particularly those comments made by members of the Liberal National Party and the Turnbull Government.

During the 2015 state election, when principals said they needed more resources to help them to support students in their schools, Queensland Labor listened and committed to making the SSCA's materials available in Queensland schools.

The Palaszczuk Government delivered on this promise and appointed True Relationships and Open Doors as the Queensland providers of SSCA.

SSCA are funded by the Australian Government and in February the Federal Minister for Education and Training announced an independent review to examine the appropriateness and efficacy of the resources. Given the Federal Government is responsible for funding the SSCA, they are best placed to undertake a review of the program.

The independent review found the resources are suitable for use in schools.

The review report was provided to the Australian Minister for Education and the Australian Government response has now been released. Further information regarding the review report and the Australian Government response can be accessed at www.education.gov.au/safe-schools-coalition-australia.

The Department of Education and Training has considered the findings and responses of the review and has noted that the recommendations align with what is already occurring in Queensland state schools.

In response to a Right to Information (RTI) application from the Australian Christian Lobby, the RTI decision maker decided not to release the names of schools participating in the Safe Schools Coalition program. This decision was based on concerns that the release of the list could compromise safety for students and staff. I note media reports that students at schools that have been publicly linked to the SSCA have been harassed by anti-Safe Schools protestors on their way to school.

The Palaszczuk Government will not turn its back on Queensland principals, teachers and students. SSCA's resources will remain available in Queensland, as promised at the state election.

The SSCA program is not mandatory in Queensland Schools. Principals, in consultation with their school community, decide what programs best suit the needs of their students and I have faith in the professional judgement of teachers who make decisions every day about what is age appropriate for students.

The Palaszczuk Government will continue to work with SSCA, principals, teachers and school communities, including parents, to promote safe and inclusive schools and deliver on the promise we made to Queenslanders at the state election.

Yours sincerely



KATE JONES MP
Minister for Education and
Minister for Tourism and Major Events

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