



SEXUAL HEALTH SOCIETY
OF QUEENSLAND

 **SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIAN
SEXOLOGISTS**
QUEENSLAND

PO Box 885
New Farm QLD 4005

OPEN LETTER

To:

Hon Kate Jones, Minister for Education and Minister for Tourism and Major
Events

PO Box 15033

CITY EAST QLD 4002

Email: education@ministerial.qld.gov.au

and

Hon Cameron Dick

Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services

GPO Box 48

BRISBANE QLD 4001

Email: health@ministerial.qld.gov.au

7 May 2016

Dear Ministers Jones and Dick

In recent months, the Safe Schools program has been unjustly attacked in federal parliament with many inaccurate and defamatory statements about the program. This concerted campaign appears to be part of a strong and deliberate effort to generate disinformation aimed at dismantling the program.

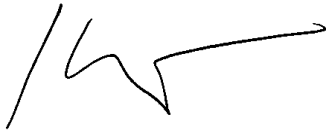
The Sexual Health Society of Queensland and the Society of Australian Sexologists [Queensland Branch] wish to express our support for the Safe Schools program and restate the case for the promotion of human dignity and integrity. The program is a major positive step in ensuring that young people with diverse sexual orientation and gender identities are able to develop their

own identities without bullying and other forms of stigma and discrimination. This is essential for them to become mature members of our communities without being damaged and harmed during their time in the education system and critical for the protection of their mental health.

With continuing calls for a national plebiscite to decide the issue of marriage equality, we expect that the negative forces will increase their hostility to the issue and that considerable harm will result to young people exploring their sexual and gender identity. The predictable harms that will be compounded by such public hostility include increases in depression, self-harm and potentially suicide. Research from La Trobe University informed the development of the Safe Schools programs and showed the already high levels of bullying in the school system against such children and the resulting harms.

We call on you as leaders in the Parliament of Queensland to show your support for this program publicly and provide funds from the state budget to allow the program to continue. Additionally, we ask that you express the need for vigilance to protect young people from the harmful effects that a polarised community debate on marriage equality could generate for our young people.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'G. Neilsen', written in a cursive style.

Dr Graham Neilsen
President, Sexual Health Society of Queensland
President, Society of Australian Sexologists [Queensland]