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Dear Emeritus Professor Bill Loudon,

As a relationship and sexuality educator, I am committed to ensuring all our resources and program materials related to sexuality are inclusive. We create understanding and a supportive environment for sexually diverse people, as is an expected standard of professional education in this field. We have identified this as such an important area that on May 17 2014 to coincide with International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia (IDAHOT), *Youth Wellbeing Project*, who I represent, pledged the following:

As an educational provider and youth advocacy organisation, we stand united against harassment or bullying of any kind, including discrimination aimed at ones' sexuality or gender identity. We pledge to maintain equality through our words, actions and programs, and to continue to develop inclusive practices and policies to achieve safety and trust for all clients and staff. We pledge to create greater understanding of sexual diversity through our programs and presentations.

There is no doubt that the Same Sex Attracted and Gender Diverse community (SSAGD) experience a disproportionately high level (75%) of abuse and discrimination (as outlined in the *All of Us* curriculum [1]) and it is essential that this is addressed. No one disputes the importance of creating understanding as a beneficial strategy to reduce bullying.

The *All of Us* materials used by Safe Schools Coalition provides a great deal of value for students who are questioning or identify as belonging to the LGBTI community. It is robust in its intent to specifically support these students and no doubt, many young people's mental health outcomes will have been improved with its use. Nevertheless, with additional consideration, the following queries present a respectful dialogue in areas that I believe need to be considered in order to provide holistic education, inclusive for all students from all perspectives.

All of Us states that 10% of students are same sex attracted. This uses one statistic from one survey. There are other surveys that show similar figures and numbers have remained consistent over the years.

- One study carried out in 1999 indicated that between eight and eleven percent of Australian young people experience same-sex attraction [2]
- A study carried out in 2008 amongst students found that 91% reported heterosexuality, (1%) reported being exclusively attracted to the same sex, (6%) were attracted to people of both sexes and approximately 2% were unsure. [3]

Moving into adult population surveys we see much lower percentages, with the number of people identifying as belonging to the LGBT community dropping considerably.

- An Australian nationwide survey in 2003 of over 10,173 men and 9,134 women found that among men, 97.4% identified as heterosexual, 1.6% as gay or homosexual and 0.9% as bisexual. Among women, 97.7% identified as heterosexual, 0.8% as lesbian or homosexual and 1.4% as bisexual. [4]
- An American study in 2012 of more than 120,000 interviews found that 3.4% of adults identify as LGBT. [5]
- In the 2013 Center for Disease Control survey of 34,557 adults aged 18 and over, 96.6% of adults identified as straight, 1.6% identified as gay or lesbian, and 0.7% identified as bisexual. The remaining 1.1% of adults identified as "something else," stated "I don't know the answer," or refused to provide an answer. [6]

We learn from these studies that throughout adolescence up to 11% experience some form of same-sex attraction or questioning; and up to 4% would identify as SSAGD by adult years. Hillier et al [7] outline that for LGBT young people, about 55% realised their sexuality around the age of puberty with around 10% always knowing that their sexuality was different. Hillier et al also mention two theories about sexual orientation: one from psychology and the other from social construction. Quoting directly from this paper: *While there is the sense in some of these young people's descriptions of first realisation that their sexuality is one that emerges from within them as an essential trait, there are also indications that the social environment does impact on young people's realisations by giving them a space (or not) in which to contemplate these things. It may be that the answer lies somewhere between.*

The vast majority of those who experience same sex attraction during adolescent years do not progress to formally identify as being same-sex attracted as an adult.

Formerly Director, and current Senior Research Fellow at the Kinsey Institute for Research in Sex, Gender and Reproduction, Sexologist John Bancroft, [8] states at the conclusion of a chapter dedicated to understanding sexual development: *"Overall, this chapter has asked more questions than it has provided answers. We are left with many gaps in our knowledge and understanding of normal sexual development, and significant methodological as well as political constraints on our*

ability to fill them.” Some of the theory behind sexual development that Bancroft is referring to, includes acknowledging the interaction of the biological and socio-cultural factors that interweave during adolescence, and that many young people find this a time of intense fluctuation of gender identity formation, sexual responses and relationship preferences.

This period of uncertainty extends beyond ‘who a young person is attracted to’, and also relates to those questioning gender identity. This area is expanded upon in documents by the World Health Organisation (2013) [9]; American Psychological Association (2012) [10]; and peer review journal articles in publications such as the Journal of Gay & Lesbian Mental Health (2011) [11]. These papers indicate that most cases of gender dysphoria do not persist into adulthood and instead individuals identify with their natal sex and are same-sex attracted or bisexual.

Uncertainty can continue post-transition, with some individuals experiencing the under-researched area of detransitioning or retransitioning – people who feel post-transition as though they actually identify with the gender with which they were assigned at birth. [12] [13] [14] Risks for mortality, suicidal behaviour and other psychiatric conditions may also persist and require ongoing psychiatric care. [15]

I point out all of this to say that I question why the Safe Schools Coalition resources have not made clear the following. These questions are in no way intended to stigmatise or marginalise any person who is sexually diverse.

1. Whilst there is a considerable number of adolescents who will be attracted to a person of the same sex, by adult years this number drops considerably. Why is this not mentioned at all in the curriculum?
2. Lesson 3 states that the average age of coming out is 16 – why isn't it mentioned that *over half* of young people who think they may be same-sex attracted are going through a stage of experimentation and do not experience anything other than a crush that lasts for a short period of time?
3. Many gender questioning young people do not progress to transitioning and settle into same-sex or bisexual relationships. Why is this not mentioned in the curriculum?
4. Lesson 2 asks children aged 11 – 13 to imagine themselves at a much older age. Whilst the older representatives in the videos offer good stories, is asking students to imagine they are much older than what they are, incongruent for this stage of development, particularly given the personal nature of the topic?
5. In Lesson 4, Nevo who identifies as transgender, shares that he is looking forward to a life with his girlfriend and wants to have kids with little versions of him running around. The loose notes around IVF, fostering and adoption do not seem to be clear around Nevo not having the biological capacity to father a child, and the complexities of

birthing a child post medical transition. Would this lack of explanation create confusion in this age bracket?

6. The young people in the videos are very confident in owning their sexuality and stories - certain of their decisions and portraying a positive outcome. Why is there limited focus on the turbulent nature of this period of life, nor the strong focus on the importance of seeking professional psychiatric support?
7. The people used in the videos are all above the age of consent. Why is the legal age of sexual consent not mentioned anywhere in the curriculum?
8. The continued preferred website is minus18. Much of the content on this site is designed for adolescents in an older age bracket going through a different stage of development. Why aren't 11-13 year olds - many of whom may want knowledge and explanation of definitions, or just wondering about experimenting as opposed to support in coming out - directed to a site that is more appropriate for their age bracket that shares stories inclusive of heterosexuality and young people experiencing same sex crushes that pass over time?

As an accredited sexologist in the area of sexuality education, I have reservations about the *All of Us* curriculum as it stands. The Safe Schools Coalition has steered away from identifying as a sexuality education program and instead prefers to be known as an anti-bullying program. Yet all content delivered is directly related to sexuality. Therefore, accurate information would include the turbulent nature of adolescent development, conflicting emotions that can result in various sexual feelings, and the many variables that exist for all students.

I believe the above-mentioned areas must be thoroughly reviewed and considered in order to assure emotional and psychological safety for all students. It is essential that delivery of content related to sexuality should be comprehensive, grounded in research and accuracy, holistic and inclusive so that *all students'* needs are met. Please contact me if you would like further information about the comprehensive and holistic programs we provide.

Thank you for your consideration of these matters.



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