

MEDIA RELEASE

Australian Services Union
SA + NT Branch



ASU stands in support of vital Safe Schools Coalition program and frontline workers who are under siege

2 March 2016

The Australian Services Union has pledged support for the Safe Schools Coalition following the Turnbull Government's current review of the vital support program.

The program is delivered by dedicated frontline ASU members in NGOs including SHine SA in South Australia and the Foundation for Young Australians nationally.

Australian Services Union (ASU) SA + NT Branch Secretary Joseph Scales moved today at the ASU National Executive that the Union become a supporter organisation for the program, which aims to make school more inclusive for young lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people.

"The ASU is sending a strong message that we will stand up against homophobia and transphobia whenever and wherever we see or hear it.

"We are proud to support Safe Schools Coalition Australia and its work to create positive change for same sex attracted, intersex and gender diverse students, school staff and families.

"The current review being undertaken by the Turnbull Government is a distressing criticism of a program which provides crucial support for an at risk community.

"We're talking about the potential defunding of a program that is widely credited as saving lives in the LGBTI community.

"This is a critical program delivered by frontline ASU members in NGOs who are working hard to safeguard the schooling experience for some of the most at risk students and families.

"Frighteningly, what we're now experiencing is reports of these frontline workers, as well as teachers and public servants, coping abuse and hate mail for their roles in delivering the support program.

"We now have abusive behaviour perpetuated beyond the school yard and extended to the professionals and workers who are trying to combat just that.

"This is the very real consequence of the Turnbull Government's narrative which constantly seeks to marginalise and isolate minority communities.

The Safe Schools Coalition receives just 10 per cent of the federal school chaplaincy budget.

To date the Safe Schools Program has been rolled out across 500 schools nationally with 13,000 school staff taking part in training delivered by the Safe Schools Coalition.

The facts

- Participation in the Safe Schools program is voluntarily and principals have the flexibility to choose the materials that will work best for their school.
- 13,000 school staff around Australia have already taken part in training delivered by the Safe Schools Coalition.
- At least 10 per cent of young Australians are same sex attracted and at least 4 per cent are transgender or gender diverse.
- 80 per cent of LGBTI students face abuse and bullying at school.
- LGBTI teenagers are six times likely to commit suicide.
- A 2010 Australian study of more than 3,000 same-sex attracted young people found 61 per cent reported verbal abuse because of homophobia, with 18 per cent reporting physical abuse.
- Other studies report 20 per cent of trans Australians and more than 15 per cent of lesbian, gay and bisexual Australians report current suicidal thoughts.
- ASU members are the workers who deliver this program in NGOs like SHine SA in South Australia and the Foundation for Young Australians nationally.
- The Turnbull Government's review findings are due mid-March.

For further comment or interview contact Joseph Scales on 0429 033 210 or 08 8363 1322