

Federation seeks clarification on Safe Schools

April 18, 2017

Federation is writing to the NSW Education Minister, Rob Stokes, to request more information about the decision to drop the Safe Schools program from NSW schools.

In an announcement made over the Easter long weekend, Minister Stokes announced that once federal funding for the program runs out later this year, the state government would not continue to support the program, and would replace it with a new anti-bullying strategy.

Federation's letter to the minister seeks clarification around which, if any, elements of the Safe Schools program would be incorporated into the new anti-bullying program, and how the well-being of LGBTIQ+ youth in schools will be safeguarded in the new program.

The program, originally developed in Victoria before receiving Federal Government funding and support, was subject to an independent review after some published criticism. The review found, despite claims made against the program, that all materials and lessons were age appropriate and suited the stated aims of the program.

As LGBTIQ+ youth remain the highest risk category for self-harm and suicide in Australia due to bullying and discrimination, Federation believes any future anti-bullying initiatives must give specific consideration to the needs of these students. Teachers also need to be provided with appropriate resources and clear guidelines from the Department about the delivery of lessons and programs that support LGBTIQ+ students.

Federation will await a response from the Minister about the future of such support programs in our schools.