

How do We Get the Most out of Relationships and Sexuality Education in New Zealand Schools?



New Zealand Council Of
Christian Social Services

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Organisation Name:	New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services (NZCCSS)
Organisation Description:	The New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services (NZCCSS) welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the Inquiry Topic: How do we get the most out of relationships and sexuality education in New Zealand Schools? NZCCSS has six foundation members: the Anglican Care Network, Baptist Churches of New Zealand, Catholic Social Services, Presbyterian Support and the Methodist and Salvation Army Churches. Through this membership, NZCCSS represents over 250 organisations providing a range of social support services across Aotearoa. We believe in working to achieve a just and compassionate society for all, through our commitment to our faith and Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Further details on NZCCSS can be found on our website https://nzccss.org.nz/

Tirohanga Whānui | Overview

One – We believe that evidence-based relationship and sexuality education is imperative for the development of our rangatahi:

Schools are where our young people socialise and learn to relate to others. As they grow older and begin to have meaningful relationships, it is important that evidence-based and identity sensitive education takes place throughout the education system to inform both their present and future relationships.

Two – The national curriculum must include mandatory education on consent:

Consent is the basis for a healthy relationship, and our rangatahi must be afforded the opportunity to learn about what it is and how it applies – both in the moral and legal sense. They must also be provided with information on what to do in a situation where they feel pressured.

Taunakitanga | Recommendations

One – We believe that evidence-based relationship and sexuality education is imperative for the development of our rangatahi:

NZCCSS recognises the importance of relationship and sexuality education in the development of healthy identities and relationships in our rangatahi. In this context, we believe that an overarching, evidence based national curriculum in this space is necessary. The curriculum on sexuality and gender must not be limited to health classes and must be covered in social studies and science curricula as well. Our education system shies away from teaching about subjects such as sexuality due to taboo, and often sees teen sexuality as a problem rather than a natural phenomenon. Significant research shows positive outcomes across the board from integrated and positive approaches to sexual, sexuality and gender education (Goldfarb & Lieberman, 2021). If Aotearoa is to become an inclusive and thriving society, the building of healthy and respectful relationships alongside education around our rainbow community will be an integral pillar of this process.

Two – The national curriculum must include mandatory education on consent:

The United Kingdom provides significant and compulsory education around both consent and the laws which apply to it, ensuring that young people know the importance of consent in both the relational and legal sense. Following this lead, Aotearoa must require an applied and specific curriculum to cover these topics. Education leads to rangatahi making more informed decisions and understanding their rights, as well as providing contact information for them to use if they are put into pressured positions.

Tohutoro | References

Goldfarb, E. S., & Lieberman, L. D. (2021). Three decades of research: The case for comprehensive sex education. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 68*(1), 21-22.