



30 August 2021



Thank you for your email of 21 July 2021 to the Ministry of Education, requesting information about the consultations that were undertaken for *Relationships and Sexuality Education - A guide for teachers, leaders, and boards of trustees* (Ministry of Education, 2020).

Your request has been considered under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act).

*Relationships and Sexuality Education* is a refreshed version of the 2015 Ministry publication *Sexuality Education: a guide for principals, boards of trustees, and teachers*. The refresh was driven by an Education Review Office report in 2018, which is available [here](#). It was informed by an awareness of changing family structures, shifting social norms in relation to gender and sexuality, the rise of social media, and the increased use of digital communications and devices. The report noted that overall, curriculum coverage in this area was inconsistent, and in many cases, there were significant gaps. The refresh acknowledges the increased calls for social inclusion and for the prevention of bullying, violence, and child abuse. It recognises the importance of social and emotional learning for healthy relationships.

The guidance inside this resource continues to draw on Hutchinson's<sup>1</sup> core recommendations and incorporates the latest research on relationships, gender, sexuality, and wellbeing. It takes into account the cultural and social changes noted above, and the related interagency work to prevent violence. Aotearoa New Zealand's ongoing commitments to national and international legislation, including Te Tiriti o Waitangi and the Human Rights Act 1993 are also reflected.

Extensive consultations took place in the drafting of these guidelines to ensure that it reflected best practice, the most up to date evidence, and the Aotearoa New Zealand context.

I will address each of your questions in turn.

- 1. Which groups and individuals were asked for input to the draft guidelines?**
- 2. What are the credentials of each group or individual who provided input?**

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<sup>1</sup> Hutchinson, P. (2013). *Inquiry into Improving Child Health Outcomes and Preventing Child Abuse with a Focus from Preconception until Three Years of Age*. Volume 1: Report of the Health Committee, November 2013. New Zealand House of Representatives, Wellington.

3. ***Did you consult with all schools or with a selection of schools and what form did that consultation take?***
4. ***Were any lesbian groups consulted separately from combined rainbow groups?***
5. ***Were any women's groups consulted separately from the National Council of Women?***
6. ***What process was used to decide who should and should not be consulted about the guidelines?***

Attached as **Appendix A** to this response is a list of all the people that were consulted in the drafting of the guidelines, which stage of the consultation process they were engaged in, and the method of consultation. It also lists the organisation that they are a member of, which, as you can see, is a diverse range of organisations.

Associate Professor Katie Fitzpatrick, Head of School of Te Kura o te Marautanga me te Ako, The School of Curriculum and Pedagogy, and Associate Professor of Health and Physical Education, as the lead writer in this project, used her wealth of experience and deep knowledge of this area to select those that were consulted. More than 45 people from over 30 organisations participated in this process to ensure it was rooted in the most up to date evidence and people's lived experience.

7. ***What is the expert advice you received about same-sex orientation and transgender identities from these groups or individuals?***

The advice you have requested was provided to the Ministry under a strict obligation of confidence, therefore I am withholding this information under section 9(2)(ba)(i) of the Act, to protect information provided under an obligation of confidence. I believe that making this information available would likely prejudice the future supply of similar information. It is in the public interest for the Ministry to continue to receive this information.

As you are aware, the sum advice of all the consultations, including those from academics and experts, is available in the guidelines themselves, which are publicly available at [health.tki.org.nz/Teaching-in-Health-and-Physical-Education-HPE/Policy-Guidelines/Relationships-and-Sexuality-Education](https://health.tki.org.nz/Teaching-in-Health-and-Physical-Education-HPE/Policy-Guidelines/Relationships-and-Sexuality-Education). This is a clear reflection of the type of expert advice we received regarding same-sex orientation and transgender issues. I would also encourage you to engage with the guideline's reference section, where the research and published work of organisations like the Human Rights Commission, and academics like Katie Fitzpatrick as lead writer, are detailed.

8. ***Did you have any specific consultation with parents and, if so, how did you carry out the consultation?***

Parents as a cohort were not specifically consulted in the development of these guidelines. A key reason for this is that parents are already given a voice, as schools are required to consult with their communities on their health curriculum, which includes relationships and sexuality education, every two years. This is to ensure that the needs of the community are being reflected in what is being taught. Importantly, the school community includes students, as the guidelines first and foremost must relate to them.

9. ***When writing the guidelines, did the author(s) refer to the Department of Education, England, sex education guidelines, released in September 2020?***

As you will see from the list of those consulted, academics across New Zealand and Australia were part of this process. As the curriculum needs to reflect our commitments under Te Tiriti o Waitangi, emphasis was placed on finding academics who could speak to that. As you may know, Indigenous peoples with diverse sexual orientation, gender identities and expressions, and sex characteristics have existed throughout history, across countless cultures and regions, including the Pacific. Prior to colonisation, diverse identities and expressions were accepted as a normal part of Te Ao Māori. It is vital that the guidelines reflected this, and so time was not spent analysing how European nations are framing their guidelines for their own unique populations.

Please note, the Ministry now proactively publishes OIA responses on our website. As such, we may publish this response on our website after five working days. Your name and contact details will be removed.

Thank you again for your email. You have the right to ask an Ombudsman to review this decision. You can do this by writing to [info@ombudsman.parliament.nz](mailto:info@ombudsman.parliament.nz) or Office of the Ombudsman, PO Box 10152, Wellington 6143.

Nāku noa, nā



Pauline Cleaver  
**Associate Deputy Secretary**  
**Early Learning and Student Achievement**

**Jeremy Barnes**

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From: [REDACTED]  
Sent: Wednesday, 21 July 2021 7:32 PM  
To: Enquiries National <enquiries.national@education.govt.nz>  
Subject: Official Information Request

Kia ora,

This request is regarding the Relationships and Sexuality Guidelines that were published by the Ministry of Education in 2020.

Please provide all the information you hold (minutes of meetings, emails, reports, and anything else of relevance) to answer these questions:

1. Which groups and individuals were asked for input to the draft guidelines?
2. What are the credentials of each group or individual who provided input?
3. What is the expert advice you received about same-sex orientation and transgender identities from these groups or individuals?
4. Did you consult with all schools or with a selection of schools and what form did that consultation take?
5. Did you have any specific consultation with parents and, if so, how did you carry out the consultation?
6. What process was used to decide who should and should not be consulted about the guidelines?
7. Were any lesbian groups consulted separately from combined rainbow groups?
8. Were any women's groups consulted separately from the National Council of Women?
9. When writing the guidelines, did the author(s) refer to the Department of Education, England, sex education guidelines, released in September 2020, that stated:

*You should not reinforce harmful stereotypes, for instance by suggesting that children might be a different gender based on their personality and interests or the clothes they prefer to wear... Materials which suggest that non-conformity to gender stereotypes should be seen as synonymous with having a different gender identity should not be used and you should not work with external agencies or organisations that produce such material. While teachers should not suggest to a child that their non-compliance with gender stereotypes means that either their personality or their body is wrong and in need of changing, teachers should always seek to treat individual students with sympathy and support.*

Ngā mihi nui

[REDACTED]