



SUPPORTING TRANS & GENDER DIVERSE STUDENTS

If you need help to understand the information in this policy, please contact the school on 9547 1224



Athol Road Primary School is committed to providing a safe and respectful learning environment for all members of our school community.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to explain to our school community how Athol Road Primary School supports the engagement and inclusion of trans and gender diverse students. This includes supporting trans and gender diverse students who want to socially affirm their gender identity at Athol Road Primary School.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all trans and gender diverse students, including those who are socially affirming their gender, fellow students, staff and the broader school community at Athol Road Primary School.

This policy sits alongside Athol Road Primary School's Inclusion and Diversity Policy which explains our school's commitment to providing a safe, inclusive and supportive school environment which values the human rights of all students and staff.

GUIDELINES

- This policy applies to all trans and gender diverse students, including those who are socially affirming their gender, fellow students, staff and the broader school community at Athol Road Primary School
- Definitions for a range of gender diverse presentations are listed below:
 - Gender diverse:** generally refers to a range of genders expressed in different ways. This term includes those who may identify as trans, gender non-binary, gender fluid, or who otherwise feel that their gender identity does not align with the sex assigned to them at birth.
 - Gender identity:** is defined under the Sex Discrimination Act 1984 as meaning the gender-related identity, appearance or mannerisms or other gender-related characteristics of a person (whether by way of medical intervention or not) with or without regard to the person's designated sex at birth.
 - Gender affirmation:** refers to the process where a trans or gender diverse person takes steps to socially and/or physically feel more aligned with their gender. There is a wide range of ways this process differs between people. Some people may change how they interact with others, and other may change their appearance or seek medical assistance to better express their gender. 'Gender transition' is another term which is commonly used to describe this process.
 - Trans:** short for transgender, refers to a person whose gender does not exclusively align with the one they were assigned at birth.
- It is unlawful under state and federal laws to discriminate against a person on the basis of their gender identity. Anti-discrimination laws:
 - require Athol Road Primary School to take reasonable and proportionate measures to eliminate discrimination on the basis of gender identity, including by taking positive steps to promote an inclusive school environment
 - prohibit direct and indirect discrimination on the basis of gender identity.
- Athol Road Primary School will take reasonable steps to eliminate unlawful discrimination on the basis of gender. The school will support trans and gender diverse students by:
 - providing a supportive, inclusive and respectful environment
 - challenging all forms of discrimination and bullying on the basis of gender identity
 - making necessary arrangements to support students who want to socially affirm their gender identity at school, including enabling them to participate in all school activities
 - respecting a student's right to privacy and confidentiality
- State laws protect the privacy and confidentiality of student information so that information about a student's transition to their affirmed gender is limited to those staff who need to know in order to support students' wellbeing and comply with our duty of care to students. Athol Road Primary School will consult with and reach agreement with the student and where appropriate, their family, as to what information is necessary to be communicated to the broader school community.
- Athol Road primary School will support a student to socially affirm their gender at school upon reasonable request of the student (where they are a mature minor) or a person with decision making responsibility for a student.
- In circumstances where a student wishes or needs to affirm their gender without the consent of their parent/s or carer/s or where there is a dispute, the principal of Athol Road Primary School will consider whether the student is a mature minor for the purposes of decisions about their gender identity with reference to Departmental policy: 'Decision Making by Mature Minors'
- Where a student is not a mature minor for the purposes of making a decision, the school will work with the parent/s/carer/s and the students and relevant Departmental staff to ensure that appropriate support is provided to the student.
- Athol Road Primary School will develop a Student Support Plan – Gender Affirmation where the student will be at the

- centre of creating their own support plan and engaged in all decision-making.
- A letter from a gender identity specialist may be requested by the school to support them in developing the plan. This letter is not a conditional requirement for the school in providing support to the student, but it may help to ensure that the school is adequately discharging its duty of care to a student by planning appropriately. Refer to *Appendix 1* for details on gender identity specialist services.
- This policy should be read in conjunction with Student Wellbeing and Engagement, inclusion, Anti-Bullying, Statement of Values and Inclusion policy

IMPLEMENTATION:

- Athol Road Primary School will make adjustments and arrangements so that the student can participate fully in all aspects of school life as their affirmed gender. This includes but is not limited to the following areas:
 - School documentation records: change the student's name and gender on all school documentation and records (including CASES21) to reflect the student's name and affirmed gender notwithstanding that these may differ to the name and gender recorded on the student's birth certificate. It may be necessary to keep a record of the student's affirmed gender together with any record of the student's sex at birth where the student's affirmed gender differs from the sex assigned at school. Advice on changing school records and documentation is available from Legal Division on legal.services@edumail.vic.gov.au or 03 9637 3146.
 - Toilets, change rooms and other facilities: the use of these will be based on the student's gender identity, or whichever facilities meet their needs in relation to their safety and wellbeing. Accessible toilets and facilities will not be the only option given to students
 - Uniform: students will wear the uniform that they are most comfortable wearing that meets the school's uniform code
 - School camps, sport/PE, school events and extracurricular activities: students will be encouraged and able to participate in all school activities as their affirmed gender, or be able to participate in a way that accommodates their needs in relation to their safety and wellbeing
- Athol Road Primary School will develop a 'Student Support Plan – Gender Affirmation' for each individual student
- The Principal is responsible for:
 - Identifying if the student has current supports in place and does not automatically assume that school-based wellbeing supports will be required
 - Responding to students or parents/guardians who identify a need, such as counselling support
 - Ensuring that the student understands they are a partner in a plan and actively follows mutually agreed decisions.
 - Creating a 'Student Support Plan – Gender Affirmation' in conjunction with the Wellbeing Team, student and parents/guardians that ensures the school responds to the student's needs and addresses any facilities and privacy issues. Refer to *Appendix 2* for 'Student Support Plan – Gender Affirmation' template
- The 'Student Support Plan – Gender Affirmation' will:
 - Cater to the student's gender identity
 - Reflect this policy
 - Be developed over staggered sessions to allow time for trialling and opportunity for adjustments to occur
 - Consider the best timing to undertake any change of gender identity, such as term break
 - Consider implementing a Student Support Group to support, guide and monitor the student's progress
 - Agree to arrangements in relation to use of toilet facilities
 - Consider the wellbeing of other students in an addendum to the plan, in the event the student's transgender status becomes known and causes distress. This should include a student support referral process
 - Determine whether other staff members, such as specialists, need to be advised to support or teach the student
 - List the names of staff members who know of the gender identity change
 - Identify processes to:
 - review the plan
 - inform others should it be decided necessary
 - address potential school community concerns
 - manage unforeseen circumstances
- The student's privacy and confidentiality is to be protected by minimising the number of staff who know the student's transgender status. In most cases this is limited to the principal. It should not be assumed that a staff member or the student's social network is aware.
- Where the student who is changing gender identity stays at the same school, community members who knew the student before may need emotional support/de-briefing and further education on gender identity issues.
- Staff will receive professional development on gender diverse issues and provided with a copy of relevant information such as 'Responding to Concerns: Supporting Trans Gender/ Gender Diverse Students Talking Points Guide.' Refer to *Appendix 3* for more information.

COMMUNICATION

This policy will be communicated to our school community in the following ways:

- Induction processes
- Staff handbook/manual

- Staff briefings/meetings as required
- Parent Information sessions
- Newsletters
- Hard copy from school administration upon request

POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL

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|----------------------------|-----------|
| Policy last reviewed | June 2020 |
| Approved by | Principal |
| Next scheduled review date | June 2022 |

APPENDIX 1: GENDER SPECIFIC SUPPORT SERVICES

HEADSPACE

Headspace, the national youth mental health organisation, has extended its phone line to support parents who are concerned about the mental health and wellbeing of their child. The phone line (1800 650 890) is available to parents between 9am and 5pm Monday to Friday and is staffed by qualified youth mental health professionals.

Web: <https://www.headspace.org.au/>

BEYOND BLUE/YOUTH BEYOND BLUE

Beyondblue provides information and support to help everyone in Australia achieve their best possible mental health, whatever their age and wherever they live. Youth beyondblue provides information and resources as well as telephone and chat support

Web: <https://www.beyondblue.org.au/who-does-it-affect/lesbian-gay-bi-trans-and-intersex-lgbtipeople>

Web: www.youthbeyondblue.com

MINUS18

Minus18 is Australia's national network for LGBTI youth. Their website provides information on youth events, workshops, campaigns and access to resources developed by and for young people. Minus18 also have a link to the *All of Us* LGBTI teaching and learning resource and accompanied videos.

Web: www.minus18.org.au

YGENDER

Ygender is a peer led social support and advocacy group for transgender and gender diverse young people.

Web: www.ygender.org.au

SWITCHBOARD AUSTRALIA

Switchboard Victoria provides peer based, volunteer run telephone and online chat support to LGBTI people of all ages. The phone line is available 7 days a week, from 3pm to midnight.

Telephone: 1800 184 52

Web: www.switchboard.org.au

PARENTLINE VICTORIA

Parentline is a confidential and anonymous phone counselling service for parents and carers of children and teenagers in Victoria. Parentline offers counselling, information and support around a range of parenting issues. Counsellors are available 7 days a week, 8am to midnight.

Telephone: 13 22 89

PARENTS OF GENDER DIVERSE CHILDREN

Parents of Gender Diverse Children provides peer support to parents and carers of transgender and gender diverse children. They offer information, referrals, peer support and connections within this community.

Web: www.pgdc.org.au

TRANSCEND

Transcend provides peer support to parents and carers of transgender and gender diverse children. They offer community connection, information and advocacy.

Web: www.transcendsupport.com.au

ROYAL CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL GENDER SERVICE

Gender clinic for children and adolescents under 17 years of age.

Address: 50 Flemington Road, Parkville, VIC 3052

Web: <http://www.rch.org.au/adolescent-medicine/gender-service/>

Telephone: 03 9345 5522

THE BOUVERIE CENTRE, VICTORIA'S FAMILY INSTITUTE

The Bouverie Centre is a state-wide service which provides Family Therapy, Training and Consultation. Family Therapy is provided to families including Trans and gender diverse families. The centre-based service is funded by the Department of Human Services and is free of charge.

Web: <https://www.bouverie.org.au/>

Phone: 9385 5100

GENDER HELP FOR PARENTS

This website has been created by Australian parents who have struggled to find information about services and support for issues around their child's identity.

Web: www.transcendsupport.com.au

PARENTS OF GENDER DIVERSE CHILDREN

Supports gender diverse young people and their families. E-mail: info@pgdc.org.au

Web: <http://www.pgdc.org.au>

TRANSFAMILY

TransFamily is a Peer Support Group for parents, siblings, partners, extended family and/or friends of a TGD person. They are a Melbourne-based group that meet in Carlton on the 4th Saturday of each month except December and January. They regularly run workshops and have guest speakers to address the group.

Web: <https://transfamilysite.wordpress.com>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/transfamilysupportgroup>

RAINBOW NETWORK

Rainbow Network provides a directory of all LGBTI support groups in Victoria.

www.rainbownetwork.com.au

ZOE BELLE GENDER COLLECTIVE

Zoe Belle Gender Collective is an online not-for-profit providing support, training and resources for the Victorian transgender and gender diverse community.

www.zbgc.org.au

VICTORIA LEGAL AID

Victoria Legal Aid provides legal advice and assistance, including in relation to LGBTI discrimination.

www.legalaid.vic.gov.au

EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE

If a student is in need of immediate assistance, please contact:

- Lifeline Australia 13 11 14
- Kids Helpline 1800 55 1800
- For emergency medical assistance, please call 000

APPENDIX 2: SCHOOL MANAGEMENT PLAN TEMPLATE



**Confidential
Gender Support Plan**

The purpose of this document is to create a shared understanding about the ways in which the student’s authentic gender will be accounted for and supported at school. School staff, caregivers and the student should work together to complete this document. Ideally, each will spend time completing the various sections to the best of their ability and then come together to review sections and confirm shared agreements about using the plan.

Date: _____

Student’s preferred name _____ Student’s Legal Name _____

Student’s gender _____ Assigned gender at birth _____

Student Year Level _____ Date of Birth _____

Parent/ Guardian details _____

Meeting participants _____

What is the nature of the student’s transition (male to female, female to male, a shift in gender expression etc)

Parent / Guardian Involvement

Are guardians of the student aware and supportive of their child’s gender transition? Yes No

If not, what considerations must be accounted for in implementing this plan?

Confidentiality, Privacy and Discloser

Is the student formally and openly transitioning into a different gender? Yes No Partially

Provide details _____

Who is aware that the student is transitioning/ gender questioning?

What is the specific information that will be conveyed to other students, parents, staff?

What requests will be made?

With whom and when will this information be shared?

- Department of Education District staff are informed (Regional Director, SSO staff etc)
- Administration / Office staff
- Leadership staff Specify staff: _____
- Welfare Team
- Teachers and other school staff Specify staff: _____
- Students All students or only immediate peers or year level?
Specify _____
- Student is open with whole school community (adults and peers) about gender
- Other _____

Will any sort of information be shared with other families about the student's transition? With whom?

- Families in the child's grade
- Whole school
- Other _____

Who will be responsible for communicating this? _____ By when? _____

How will it be distributed? _____

What specific information will be shared or not shared? _____

If the student or family has asserted a degree of privacy, what are expectations of Athol Road Primary School / Kindergarten if that privacy is compromised? How will a teacher/ staff member respond to questions about the student's gender from others: students / parents etc?

Students: _____

Parents: _____

Staff:

Time Frame for gender affirmation:

When will this occur? _____

Note: a student may not make all the changes at the same time, they may have a more staged approach.

Student Safety

Are there any specific safety issues concerning the student? (i.e. Bullying etc) Yes No

Specify _____

Who will be the student's "go to adult" at school? _____

If this person is not available, what should the student do? _____

What, if any, will be the process for periodically checking in with the student and/or family?

If the student is feeling unsafe, how will they communicate their need for help?

During class _____

In the yard _____

Other _____

Names, Pronouns and Student Records

What name/ gender marker is entered into the Student Information Systems? (i.e. Sentral/ Cases/ Kinder data system)

Note: Transgender name changes come under the sexual discrimination act and a formal name change on the birth certificate is not required

Who will update this information? _____

Will the students' preferred name and gender marker be used in data reported to the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development? Yes No

If no, what are the reasons and actions that can be taken to address this?

Name to be used when referring to the student _____ Pronouns _____

How will the student's privacy be accounted for and maintained in the following situations or contexts?

During enrolment: _____

With CRT teachers _____

School Photos _____

Official school/ home communication _____

Unofficial school/ home communication _____

School publications _____

If the student's guardians are not aware and supportive of the child's gender status, how will school – home communication be handled?

Are there any other areas the school needs to protect the information about the students preferred name and gender marker? How will these be managed?

Use of facilities

Student will use the following toilet's at school _____

Student will change close in the following place _____

If the student has questions/ concerns about the facilities, who will be the contact person?

What are the expectations regarding the use of facilities for any class excursions or camps?

Uniform

Does the student have access to a uniform that aligns with their preferred gender? Yes No

How will the school manage the student's change in uniform? _____

Other considerations

Are there any specific social dynamics with other students, families or staff members that need to be discussed or accounted for? _____

Does the student have any sibling(s) at school? Yes No

Name and Year Level of sibling (s) _____

Factor's to be considered regarding sibling's needs _____

How will the school manage any gender specific lessons/ units (i.e sex education, social and emotional learning), especially when the genders are separated? _____

What training will staff receive to build their capacity for working with gender diverse students?

Support Plan Review

How will this plan be monitored? _____

Review Date _____

Date/ time of next meeting: _____

Appendix 3 Supporting Trans Gender / Gender Diverse Students: Talking Points Guide

Supporting Trans Gender / Gender Diverse Students: Talking Points Guide

This guide provides some examples of how to respond to questions or concerns from the school community about gender diverse students. It can be used to educate the community about a student who is either in the process of transitioning or has transitioned to a different gender from the one they were assigned to at birth. It provides a structure on how to respond to specific issues as well as how to formulate broader educative responses to gender diversity. The guide offers suggestions and is intended to be tweaked to suit your specific context.

This guide has been adapted from: Schools in Transition: A guide for supporting transgender students in K-12 schools, Human Rights Campaign Foundation , <https://www.genderspectrum.org/staging/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/Schools-in-Transition-2015.pdf>

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

Why should my child learn about gender at school?

- School is a place where children are taught to respect one another and to learn to work together regardless of their differences. Learning about gender diversity is part of that work. Creating a more tolerant, inclusive and accepting school environment teaches all children to recognize and resist rigid gender stereotypes that can be harmful to a child's developing identity.
- We teach children to stand up for others, to resist bullying and to work together. Australia has different laws that protect people from discrimination regardless of their gender status. It is important to uphold these important laws and teach students to be tolerant and inclusive.
- Many children whose gender is seen as different than what is expected can face very difficult circumstances. Teasing, bullying and violence are common experiences for gender diverse children. Athol Road has a strict anti bullying policy and this education is an important part of upholding this policy and the schools zero tolerance to bullying.

Isn't my child too young to be learning about gender?

- Children are already learning about it. Messages about gender are everywhere (in the media, sport, culture, politics etc). Children receive very clear messages about the 'rules' for being a boy or a girl as well as the consequences for violating them. By learning about gender, children have an opportunity to explore a greater range of interests, ideas and activities. This enables them to be free to discover new talents and interests without the pressure to conform to rigid gender stereotypes. Teaching about gender promotes greater engagement in their learning and more positive mental health outcomes.

If you are talking about gender, will that include teaching about sex and sexuality?

- No. When we discuss gender, we talk about what people like to wear, the activities they engage in and how they feel about themselves. We explore how society portrays typical stereotypes of maleness and femaleness. This is not sexuality. Sexuality involves physical intimacy and attraction. Gender is about self-identity. Gender identity is a person's internal sense of where they fit on the gender spectrum. This includes all children whether they define themselves in 'typical' gender terms or not.
- If responding to questions from students about physical sex, the discussion uses phrases such as 'private parts' and even if anatomical terms come up, nothing specific to human reproduction or sexuality is taught. For the most part, children are simply not raising these questions. While as adults , we struggle to separate the ideas of gender and sexuality (primarily because many adults were taught that these are linked), children have an ability to grasp the complexity of gender diversity because sexuality does not factor in to complicate their understanding.

Ideas about gender diversity go against the values we are instilling in my child at home. Are you trying to teach my child to reject these values?

- Absolutely not. Our children encounter people with different beliefs when they join any community. While one aim for learning about diversity is to become more tolerant and accepting of those around us, not everyone is going to be best friends. This does not mean that they can not get along and learn together. The purpose of learning about gender diversity is to demonstrate that children are unique and that there is no single way to be a boy or a girl. If a child does not agree with or understand another student's gender identity or expression, they do not have to change how they feel inside about it. However, they also do not get to make fun of, harass or harm other students whose gender identity they don't understand or support. Gender diversity education is about teaching students to live and work with others. It comes down to the simple agreement that all children must be treated with kindness and respect.

Won't my child get confused if we speak about more than two gender options?

- Experience shows that, with enough information, children of any age can understand that there are more than the two gender categories currently recognized by our society. When it is explained to them in a simple, age appropriate manner, gender diversity is an easy concept for children to grasp.

Don't children who are trans gender or gender diverse have lots of problems? Is gender nonconformity a product of abuse or emotional problems?

- No. Being gender diverse is part of a normal aspect of human diversity. It is not a malfunction, developmental abnormality or a mental health problem.
- Some gender diverse children experience a lot of societal abuse and parental rejection. This is not the cause of their gender expression. This type of abuse leads many children to experience extreme distress, loneliness, lower self esteem and other negative feelings. Discrimination and rejection can cause mental health problems, but emotional problems DO NOT cause gender non conformity.
- Gender diverse students' emotional distress can be greatly reduced when they receive positive support and affirmation from their family, peers and community.

Won't allowing children to express non- traditional genders cause them to be teased or harassed?

- While there is a great deal of data suggesting that gender-expansive youth do face teasing, there is a growing body of knowledge that points to the impact gender-expansive education can have on reducing that treatment. If children are being treated badly because of who they are, the answer is not to try and prevent them from being themselves. Rather, we should instead ask what needs to be done to address the teasing. Providing education that expands students' understanding about stereotypes and limitations of self-expression can go a long way to preventing teasing.

Why is the school making such a big deal about this? How many of these kids are there anyway?

- I can't talk about any individual students, just as I would never talk about your child. Personal information about the students including their gender is private. Is there something we can do to help you or your child better understand gender related issues?
- Gender discrimination is illegal in Australia. There are several laws that protect people's rights. It is important that the school complies with these laws and make sure it is acting inclusively and respectfully for all students regardless of their gender.
- I know this is new territory for many of us. Sometimes change is really challenging. Perhaps I can provide you with further information about this issue.

Won't discussing gender encourage my child to be transgender?

Being transgender is not something that a person chooses. Studies show that although parents cannot make their child gay or transgender, they can deeply influence how their children feel about themselves. Parental pressure to enforce gender conforming can damage a child's self esteem and is a high predictor of negative health outcomes and risk-taking behaviours for youth. Transgender youth have a high rate of suicidal thoughts and behaviours.

Discussing gender will have the effect of removing much of the pressure students face to fit into narrowly defined expectations that few if any can actually meet.

Who is protecting my child?

- What are the specific behaviours of another person that is making your child feel unsafe?
- I can assure you that the safety of all of the students at this school/ kinder remains my highest priority. If your child is feeling unsafe, we need to know about it. Can you tell me about specific situations or occurrences that have taken place in which your child's safety was at risk?
- Our expectation for all our students is that they respect the privacy and physical boundaries of other students. If the behaviours of one student was making another student feel unsafe, that is an issue we take very seriously. Is something or someone behaving in a way that makes your child feel unsafe?
- How can we help your child to feel more comfortable? If for any reason your student needs additional support, such as a private space to change or use the restroom, we will work with you and your child to provide these.

What is to stop a boy from coming to school one day and simply declaring that he is a girl so he can use the girl's bathrooms/ change rooms?

- Schools have always worked to support the needs of individual students in a variety of ways. For any student who requires support related to gender, the school works very deliberately to provide the necessary services. This does not take place without a great deal of care and planning. Schools all over Australia are supporting transgender students in these ways and this issue simply does not come up.
- A transgender student is very different from a young person who is claiming to be a different gender for some improper purpose. Transgender students are not trying to get away with something or make this up. Their gender expression is an important part of their identity and development and should not be viewed as merely a whim or a passing feeling that they have. They are not attention seeking or being defiant.

I don't really feel like I know how to answer my child's questions.

- Once again, explain that you are learning about this too. It is important, however, to monitor and understand your own feelings before you initiate this kind of conversation. Children can pick up on your feelings towards a subject. So, if you are still feeling uncomfortable about the concept of gender diversity, then consider taking additional time to increase your understanding.
- Answer children's questions simply and let them take the lead on how deep the conversation goes. Most children are satisfied with this approach.
- To respect one another and to learn to work together regardless of their differences. Learning about gender diversity is part of that work. Creating a more tolerant, inclusive and accepting school environment teaches all children to recognize and resist rigid gender stereotypes that can be harmful to a child's developing identity.
- Children are taught to stand up for others, resist bullying and to work together. Australia has different laws that protect people from discrimination regardless of their gender status. It is important to uphold these important laws and teach students to be tolerant and inclusive.
- Many children whose gender is seen as different to what is expected can face very difficult circumstances. Teasing, bullying and violence are common experiences for gender diverse children. Athol Road has a strict anti-bullying policy and this education is an important part of upholding this policy and the school's zero tolerance to bullying.

Isn't my child too young to be learning about gender?

- Children are already learning about it. Messages about gender are everywhere (in the media, sport, culture, politics etc.) Children receive very clear messages about the 'rules' for being a boy or a girl as well as the consequences for violating them. By learning about gender, children have an opportunity to explore a greater range of interests, ideas and activities. This enables them to be free to discover new talents and

interests without the pressure to conform to rigid gender stereotypes. Teaching about gender promotes greater engagement in their learning and more positive mental health outcomes.

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- If responding to questions from students about physical sex, the discussion uses phrases such as 'private parts' and even if anatomical terms come up, nothing specific to human reproduction or sexuality is taught. For the most part, children are simply not raising these questions. While as adults, we struggle to separate the ideas of gender and sexuality (primarily because many adults were taught that these are linked), children have an ability to grasp the complexity of gender diversity because sexuality does not factor in to complicate their understanding.

Ideas about gender diversity go against the values we are instilling in my child at home. Are you trying to teach my child to reject these values?

- Absolutely not. Children encounter people with different beliefs when they join any community. While one aim for learning about diversity is to become more tolerant and accepting of those around us, not everyone is going to be best friends. This does not mean that they cannot get along and learn together. The purpose of learning about gender diversity is to demonstrate that children are unique and that there is no single way to be a boy or a girl. If a child does not agree with or understand another student's gender identity or expression, they do not have to change how they feel inside about it. However, they also do not get to make fun of, harass or harm other students whose gender identity they don't understand or support. Gender diversity education is about teaching students to live and work with others. It comes down to the simple agreement that all children must be treated with kindness and respect.

Won't my child get confused if we speak about more than two gender options?

- Experience shows that, with enough information, children of any age can understand that there are more than the two gender categories currently recognized by our society. When it is explained to them in a simple, age appropriate manner, gender diversity is an easy concept for children to grasp.

Don't children who are transgender or gender diverse have lots of problems? Is gender nonconformity a product of abuse or emotional problems?

- No. Being gender diverse is part of a normal aspect of human diversity. It is not a malfunction, developmental abnormality or a mental health problem.
- Some gender diverse children experience a lot of societal abuse and parental rejection. This is not the cause of their gender expression. This type of abuse leads many children to experience extreme distress, loneliness, lower self-esteem and other negative feelings. Discrimination and rejection can cause mental health problems, but emotional problems DO NOT cause gender non-conformity.
- Gender diverse students' emotional distress can be greatly reduced when they receive positive support and affirmation from their family, peers and community.

Won't allowing children to express non-traditional genders cause them to be teased or harassed?

- While there is a great deal of data suggesting that gender-expansive youth do face teasing, there is a growing body of knowledge that points to the impact gender-expansive education can have on reducing that treatment. If children are being treated badly because of who they are, the answer is not to try and prevent them from being themselves. Rather, we should instead ask what needs to be done to address the teasing. Providing education that expands students' understanding about stereotypes and limitations of self-expression can go a long way to preventing teasing.

Why is the school making such a big deal about this? How many of these kids are there anyway?

- I can't talk about any individual students, just as I would never talk about your child. Personal information about the students including their gender is private. Is there something we can do to help you or your child better understand gender related issues?
- Gender discrimination is illegal in Australia. There are several laws that protect people's rights. It is important that the school complies with these laws and make sure it is acting inclusively and respectfully for all students regardless of their gender.
- I know this is new territory for many of us. Sometimes change is really challenging. Perhaps I can provide you with further information about this issue.

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- Being transgender is not something that a person chooses. Studies show that although parents cannot make their child gay or transgender, they can deeply influence how their children feel about themselves. Parental pressure to enforce gender conforming can damage a child's self-esteem and is a high predictor of negative health outcomes and risk-taking behaviours for youth. Transgender youth have a high rate of suicidal thoughts and behaviours. Discussing gender will have the effect of removing much of the pressure that students face to fit into narrowly defined expectations that few, if any, can actually meet.

Who is protecting my child?

- What are the specific behaviours of another person that is making your child feel unsafe?
- I can assure you that the safety of all of the students at this school/ kinder remains my highest priority. If your child is feeling unsafe, we need to know about it. Can you tell me about specific situations or occurrences that have taken place in which your child's safety was at risk?
- Our expectation for all our students is that they respect the privacy and physical boundaries of other students. If the behaviours of one student is making another student feel unsafe, that is an issue we take very seriously. Is something or someone behaving in a way that makes your child feel unsafe?
- How can we help your child to feel more comfortable? If for any reason your student needs additional support, such as a private space to change or use the restroom, we will work with you and your child to provide these.

What is to stop a boy from coming to school one day and simply declaring that he is a girl so he can use the girl's bathrooms/ change rooms?

- Schools have always worked to support the needs of individual students in a variety of ways. For any student who requires support related to gender, the school works very deliberately to provide the necessary services. This does not take place without a great deal of care and planning. Schools all over Australia are supporting transgender students in these ways and this issue simply does not come up.
- A transgender student is very different from a young person who is claiming to be a different gender for some improper purpose. Transgender students are not trying to get away with something or make this up. Their gender expression is an important part of their identity and development and should not be viewed as merely a whim or a passing feeling that they have. They are not attention seeking or being defiant.

I don't really feel like I know how to answer my child's questions.

- Once again, explain that you are learning about this too. It is important, however, to monitor and understand your own feelings before you initiate this kind of conversation. Children can pick up on your feelings towards a subject. So, if you are still feeling uncomfortable about the concept of gender diversity, then consider taking additional time to increase your understanding.
- Answer children's questions simply and let them take the lead on how deep the conversation goes. Most children are satisfied with this approach.