



how safe?

How Safe and Inclusive are Otago Secondary Schools?

Ae ranei he haumarū, he whai wāhi ki te katoa ngā Kura Tuarua Ō Otago?

A report on the implementation of recommendations from the "Safety In Our Schools - Ko te haumarū I o tatou kura" Action Kit

He purongo ūruhi i ngā taunaki a te Kete Mahi "Safety In Our Schools - Ko te haumarū I o tatou kura"

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BACKGROUND

In 2005, OUT THERE, the New Zealand AIDS Foundation, and Rainbow Youth published *Safety in Our Schools – Ko te haumarū i o tatou kura*,¹ an action kit to assist Aotearoa New Zealand's secondary schools in developing school environments that are fully inclusive of queer students. *Safety in Our Schools* was based in part on "Non-heterosexual youth: A profile of their health and well-being", a research report on the data collected from self-identified non-heterosexual youth respondents to the University of Auckland's Adolescent Health Research Group's Youth2000 study of nearly 10,000 students. The quantitative data from this report was combined with the body of qualitative research on queer youth in schools as well as the ideas and views of queer youth, garnered via an email questionnaire commissioned especially for the action kit. The result was a 38-page resource that offered recommendations on topics ranging from addressing the widespread student misuse of the word "gay" in the classroom to offering diversity groups for queer students.

In April 2008, the Otago University Students' Association's Student Support Centre commissioned this research project, externally funded through a Lottery Grant. The purpose of the research was to determine the extent to which Otago's secondary schools are putting into practice the recommendations of *Safety in Our Schools*. More generally, it investigated how well Otago high schools are fulfilling the needs of queer students by providing safe, supportive, and inclusive school environments. The results of this research were, not surprisingly, quite varied, as they represent not only the great diversity of young people, but also the great diversity of places and institutions across Otago. Nevertheless, some patterns emerge, reflecting the special character of Otago and pointing the way to further recommendations specific to the queer young people of this region.

A WORD ABOUT LANGUAGE

In this report the term "queer" is used as in the same way as it is in *Safety in Our Schools*. That resource gives the following explanation of its choice of "queer" as an inclusive term:

Queer" is a reclaimed word that is often used collectively to describe gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, takataapui, fa'afafine and intersex (GLBTI) identities. While many people use this term, it is acknowledged that it is not the preferred term for everyone. Because of its inclusive nature, however, "queer" will be used in this action kit to encompass all non-heterosexual identities. (NZ Aids Foundation, Rainbow Youth, OUT THERE, 2005, p. 5)

It might be more accurate to state that "queer" is used here to encompass all non-heterosexual or gender diverse identities, as "transgender", "fa'afafine", and "intersex" refer to gender identities, rather than sexual orientations. And, in fact, many gender diverse people identify themselves as heterosexual. The main point, however, is the sense of the word "queer" as an umbrella term for the entire range of people whose sexual or gender orientations do not conform to heteronormative models. (For definitions of some of the terms included under the ever-widening "queer umbrella", see the Ministry

¹ Hereinafter referred to as *Safety in Our Schools*

of Social Development's list in Appendix C.) In addition, "queer" is used in *Safety in Our Schools* and in this research to include youth who are questioning their sexuality or gender, as well as youth who are perceived by others to be queer, even if they do not so self-identity, since these youth may experience prejudice similar to that experienced by self-identified queer youth.

Another pair of terms used in this report are "gender diverse" and "trans", both of which refer specifically to any student whose gender identity does not neatly conform to the gender binary system of male or female, boy or girl. These umbrella terms include transgender, transsexual, genderqueer, cross-dressing, fa'afafine, and intersexed students. These gender diverse identities are, of course, incorporated in the term "queer", however, when tackling questions about "queer" issues, both students and staff tend to address the somewhat more familiar identities of "gay", "lesbian", and "bisexual", often forgetting to consider gender diversity. In an effort to avoid 'invisibilising' trans youth in this research, respondents and interviewees were encouraged to be mindful of gender as well as sexual diversity when giving their answers. A number of questions that were intended to be specific to issues impacting gender diverse students were also included in this research.

On the topic of language and terminology it is apparent that the best terms to use are those chosen by the youth in question. "Queer" is preferred by some, but not by others. So, while it is used here as an umbrella term for a range of young people, it is not applied to individuals unless they self-identify as queer.

A Brief Overview of Otago's Secondary Schools

A total of 27 secondary schools operate in Otago, of which five are combined primary and secondary schools. The others enrol secondary students beginning in either Year 7 or Year 9.

Of the 27 secondary schools, 12 are located in Dunedin, which is also a centre of tertiary education, as home to the University of Otago, Otago Polytechnic, and the Dunedin College of Education. Decile ratings for the Dunedin secondary schools range from 5 to 10. Secondary enrolment at Dunedin high schools ranges from around 400 to 1000 students per institution. Five of Dunedin's high schools are co-ed, while four offer single-sex education for girls, and three offer single-sex education for boys. Three all-male schools and two all-female schools also offer boarding facilities for a limited number of students. Eight schools have no religious affiliations, while two claim links to the Presbyterian Church, one to the Anglican Church, and another to the Catholic Church. Half of the high schools boast some form of peer mediation programme and nearly half are Health Promoting Schools, in association with Public Health South. All 12 are signatories of the Coastal Otago Safer Schools Safer Communities charter (Appendix B).

Three of the remaining secondary schools are located in Oamaru, with the other 12 scattered across Otago. Four of these are area schools for students in Years 1-15. Decile ratings for these 15 schools are generally lower than for the Dunedin schools, and range from 4 to 10. Secondary rolls are also generally lower, and range from around 30 students up to just over 800 students. Six schools offer facilities for a small number of boarders. There are only two single-sex schools, both in Oamaru, one for girls and one for boys. Only one institution claims religious affiliation, to the Catholic Church.

This report is not intended to focus on the strengths or weaknesses of particular high schools, but to give an overall picture of the region and to make recommendations based on general patterns. Therefore, institutions are not specifically named but are referred to as co-ed or single-sex, religious or non-religious, and Dunedin or rural-Otago school, as relevant. (For a list of Otago's secondary schools, see Appendix A.)

Research Methods

To commence the research, a list of questions based directly on the recommendations given in *Safety in Our Schools* was compiled. It was decided to seek input from both staff and students on how effectively the recommendations are being applied in Otago. In order to ensure that the findings reflect current conditions in Otago's secondary schools, the scope of the research is limited to current high school students and early leavers who are still of high school age and have not been out of school for more than a year. University students or high school alumni are not included. Similarly, information was gathered from current high school staff members only, although, in a few cases, these staff members were able to make comparisons between their current institutions and others at which they had been posted recently.

To gather student opinion, over 200 anonymous three item questionnaires were handed out at four Dunedin Youth Week events in May 2008. 150 high school aged youth returned these questionnaires with their opinions on what challenges and supports queer students would find at their schools and what their schools could do to better support queer students. 34 of these youth filled in the optional contact details section, indicating that they would be interested in elaborating on their answers in a longer survey. These youth were then emailed three 15-20 item surveys on bullying and safety, curriculum, and general school environment. The three surveys were also available on the internet on a third party survey hosting website. Research accounts were established on bebo, facebook, and myspace, placing a complete description of the project, as well as links to the surveys. Bebo's search function was used to randomly select 30 current students from each Otago high school and send them invitations to take the surveys. Posters were put up all over Dunedin advertising the project and giving simple, memorable contact details for interested students. Flyers were distributed to school and private counsellors, public and private health centres, and community groups in Dunedin. A number of local churches, scouting and community groups, as well as national queer organisations, also listed notices about the project in their newsletters and on their websites.

The written responses were supplemented with personal contact with local queer youth. Through volunteer work with PFLAG South's youth group, discussions were held with about a dozen queer students from Dunedin high schools every fortnight. A separate 90 minute focus group was also held with six of these students (three male, three female, all from non-religious, co-ed schools) on topics specific to this research. Quotations are only included from the focus group, having obtained consent from the youth involved, but the fortnightly youth group discussions about being queer at high school guided the direction of the research.

To gather staff opinion, two letters were initially sent to each Dunedin secondary school, describing the project and requesting

appointments with the principal and the counsellor. All 12 schools graciously arranged meetings with either the principal or the counsellor (or both) for a 30-60 minute interview about the issues facing queer youth and the support offered by the school. In total, discussions were held with 10 counsellors and 5 principals (one of these counsellors requested that the discussion remain off the record). Through consultation with principals and counsellors, and with a few Dunedin community groups that work with schools, a list of teachers who might be amenable to participating in the research was compiled. After contacting these individuals, interviews were subsequently carried out with teachers from five Dunedin schools.

Accessing staff beyond Dunedin proved more difficult. Emails were sent directly to the principal and counsellor of each high school, explaining the project and asking them to complete and return a five-item questionnaire on challenges and support for queer students at school. Although reminder emails were sent, only four questionnaires were returned from two counsellors and two principals of four Otago schools. A phone interview was conducted with a third counsellor, and two staff members who had recently relocated to Dunedin from rural-Otago schools were interviewed in person. In total, input was received from four counsellors, two principals, and two teachers, from seven rural-Otago high schools.

Questionnaire and Survey Respondents

Of the 150 students who completed and returned the three item questionnaires, 136 gave their ages: 5 thirteen year-olds, 35 fourteen year-olds, 39 fifteen year-olds, 34 sixteen year-olds, 17 seventeen year-olds, and 7 eighteen year-olds. 103 respondents self-identified as female and 38 self-identified as male. The disparity between the numbers of male and female respondents resulted in part from higher female attendance at the Dunedin Youth Week events. In addition, potential male participants, especially those in groups, more often declined to complete the questionnaire after hearing or reading about the topic matter than did potential female participants. Students were not asked to provide the names of their schools but, as all of the Youth Week events were located in Dunedin, it is likely that most of the respondents attend Dunedin high schools.

In total, 64 youth completed one or more of the three online/email surveys. Each respondent had the option of giving their name, age, gender, and school. 49 respondents gave their ages: 1 thirteen year-old, 7 fourteen year-olds, 3 fifteen year-olds, 16 sixteen year-olds, 11 seventeen year-olds, and 11 eighteen year-olds. 31 respondents self-identified as female, and 18 respondents self-identified as male. Equal numbers of survey invitations were sent to male and female students on bebo, but the ages of the youth responding was not recorded at that time.

Of the 47 youth who identified their schools, 39 attended Dunedin high schools, as either day students or boarders. All 12 Dunedin schools were represented, ten of them by multiple students. The eight

respondents who identified themselves as students of secondary schools outside of Dunedin listed a total of six schools. In addition, several respondents who did not give the names of their high schools wrote about attending school in rural areas of Otago. Of the 64 total respondents, 10 identified their high schools as having religious affiliations and a religion curriculum, while 40 identified their high schools as non-religious. 28 respondents stated that they attended co-ed schools, while 15 attended all-female schools, and 5 attended all-male schools. The methods of surveying, in combination with the bebo-generated survey invitations, limits the survey sample to youth with access to the internet either at home or at school. Though the posters and fliers listed both a mobile number and a landline, only three youth utilised these methods of contact. Those respondents who reside in rural-Otago are likely to be confined to bebo users, as this was the primary form of publicity outside of Dunedin.

Questionnaire or survey respondents were not asked to indicate whether or not they identified as queer. The questionnaire and surveys specifically invited input from both queer and non-queer students. The primary reason for this was to ensure the safety, comfort, and participation of all the youth involved. In the public setting of the Dunedin Youth Week events, especially, it was important that students would not have to "out" themselves in order to participate. Not limiting involvement to self-identified queer youth also meant that input could be gathered from those students who might still be questioning their gender or sexuality and those who might be perceived as queer. In addition, because the questions posed related to school environments rather than to individual students, the views of non-queer students are valuable. In the surveys, in particular, respondents often did state whether or not they identified as queer, and those who did not ranged from supportive allies and friends to bullies who catalogued their abuses of queer students. These responses, with their diverse perspectives and portrayals of the spectrum of queer-friendliness in Otago schools, complement queer students' own responses.

An Initial Inventory of Challenges and Support

The first question posed to both questionnaire and survey respondents was what general challenges a queer student would face at their high schools. 200 students addressed this question. Nearly two-thirds identified bullying and teasing as a challenge. One in ten respondents (mainly males) specifically named physical or sexual violence. A third of students wrote that discrimination and homophobia would be a problem. Nearly a quarter said that queer students face social exclusion and loneliness. A smaller number of students (one in fifteen) listed discrimination or lack of support from the school itself. A similar number of students reported that both staff and students were supportive at their schools, and that a queer student would feel welcome.

Staff members echoed these challenges, adding that a queer student's struggle with non-normative gender or sexual orientation would come on top of general teenage worries, adjustment to puberty, and identity development, leading in some cases to serious confidence issues or depression. The staff of single-sex schools, both male and female, stated that prejudice, bullying, and social exclusion of queer students were likely to be more extreme there than in co-ed environments. Staff at rural Otago schools similarly felt that queer students suffer from greater prejudice and harassment than students in larger towns and cities, as well as a sense of isolation from their classmates and from the queer community, which is largely situated in more urban areas.

The second question asked of questionnaire and survey respondents was what sources of support a queer student would find at their high schools. Nearly 200 students offered their ideas. Over half suggested seeing the school guidance counsellor and a sixth suggested seeing a teacher. Others specifically stated that they would be uncomfortable with both options. In fact, one in five respondents said that a queer student would find no support at their schools. In contrast, one in four students thought that queer students would have friends to support them and one in ten students recommended the support of peer mediators or similar groups of senior students. A slightly smaller number of respondents also proposed that queer students support one another, potentially through an organised support group. Finally, a small number of rural students said that the public health nurse would be the main source of support.

School staff generally agreed that the guidance counsellor is often the first port of call for a queer student or any student wrestling with a delicate issue. Most of the counsellors display posters outside of their offices promoting acceptance of queer students and have resources and referrals available to students seeking more support on the topic. Most principals and counsellors also agreed that, while some teachers would be uncomfortable discussing gender or sexual orientation with a student, there are queer-friendly teachers at every school and hopefully a queer student would seek out one of these staff members if necessary.

Findings: Bullying and Safety

At the conclusion of the focus group held with queer students, participants were asked which of the issues discussed is the most important issue for queer students at Otago high schools. The youth didn't miss a beat, four of them responding almost in unison with "bullying". All six had encountered varying degrees of bullying at school as a result of being out or being perceived as queer. Survey respondents reported similar experiences. Two-thirds had experienced or witnessed verbal abuse directed at queer students in the classroom. One in four students cited physical abuse or threats towards queer students in the classroom. Other problem situations, in which at least half of the respondents had witnessed or experienced bullying, included buses, after-school activities, school trips, and on school grounds before or after school. In addition, over a third of students cited bullying in school toilets or changing rooms.

The form of bullying most frequently cited by respondents was name-calling. One student wrote, "When one particular student (known to be gay) walked past, juniors yelled names such as Gay, Fag at him. In class a group of guys constantly laugh at one other guy calling him similar names and saying he likes penises and bum sex." A male student at a religious school, wrote, "It's happened so many times I don't know where to start. Just like 'Ahh get away from me you fag' etc. Been called a poof by a staff member in front of the class. Lots of text bulling, and people taking the piss via text." Another student wrote about hearing a classmate describe a queer student as a "queer cunt" during class.

A number of students also listed gossip as a type of bullying. One student from a girls' school wrote that "if someone does come out at our school, it's 'gossip' and it circles around the school and everyone talks about them even in front of teachers and the person's friends." Often, this kind of gossip spreads to people the queer student may not yet wish to tell. For a number of student respondents, this included family members. In other cases, students spread rumours about classmates who are either still questioning or may not even be queer. One counsellor identified this, too, as a form of homophobic bullying and noted that it often damaged close friendships of which other students were suspicious. A student wrote, "if [the rumours] aren't true, people seem to feed off that fact that it isn't and enjoy making people upset. My friend was in tears everyday for three months because of a rumour about her being gay which wasn't true."

Some queer students also experience bullying in the form of social exclusion. One student told of a friend who came out as lesbian: "People used to run and scream out of the girls changing room, 'Oh my God! It's the lesbo! Run! She'll rape you!'" For another student, bullying took a subtler form: "I'd sit down, and people would like move away from me and then whisper loud enough for me to hear that the reason they'd moved away was because they thought I was a lesbian. And the teachers don't do anything about that, because they're like, 'Aw yeah well they have every right to move away from

you if they feel uncomfortable sitting beside you.' And it's just like yeah, but they're doing it to get at me." The principal of an all-female school agreed that this is the sort of bullying that often goes on among girls: "What we tend to see here is bullying through exclusion rather than through confrontation. And that can be just as nasty and maybe more deliberate."

Respondents reported physical harassment in a variety of forms. One male student wrote, "[I] get fruit thrown at me on a regular basis." Another student found that bullies had placed a gay porn cd in his bag. Other accounts included "pushing, hitting, taking their things," "pushing, shoving, punching," "throwing, standing, stomping on people's clothes, hitting them, spitting at them." A few students reported being threatened with weapons, and another revealed that he carries a small knife and practices martial arts to protect himself. When bullying was discussed with school staff, most were aware of some incidence of verbal bullying of queer students, but only a few seemed aware of the extent and virtually no one mentioned physical violence to queer students.

Because many instances of bullying are resolved within the classroom, word of it may not reach the counsellors and principals who were the main interviewees. When asked what their teachers do in response to bullying directed at queer students, about half of the respondents said that teachers usually either reprimand offending students or simply ask them to stop. But student respondents also offered two other explanations of the discrepancy between student and staff awareness of bullying of queer students. The first is summed up neatly in this response: "Duh, you don't do it while the teacher is in the room." This sentiment was echoed by several respondents and by the students attending the focus group. When asked what they wished school staff knew or understood about queer students, one focus group participant said, "I wish that teachers actually knew what went on."

That teachers aren't always aware of bullying in their classrooms, or elsewhere in the school, leads directly to a second possible explanation for so much bullying of queer students flying under the radar. When bullies aren't "caught in the act," the burden is on queer students to report it. As one respondent explained it, "there's nothing the school can do if people pick on people when the staff aren't around. If the student doesn't tell someone then staff can't help." A review of the websites of the Otago high schools reveals that most have strong anti-bullying policies, some of which specifically included bullying on the basis of gender and bullying on the basis of sexual orientation. Others will likely be adding clauses on homophobia, in light of the recent inclusion of sexual orientation-based bullying to the list of Education Review Office check items. In addition, all of the Dunedin high schools are signatories of the Coastal Otago Safer Schools Safer Communities charter (Appendix B), which encourages inclusion and acceptance of all people, whatever their sexual orientations. These strong anti-bullying policies and codes of conduct are assets, and it was positive to hear from students and staff alike that they are well publicised to students, as are the consequences of being found out of step with the rules.

Nevertheless, when students at the focus group were asked if they'd ever considered reporting the bullying they experienced, they all expressed the view that there was no point. Many survey respondents agreed. Though nearly every student knew who to see to make a complaint about bullying they'd witnessed or experienced, many felt that they would not be supported. Some stated that teachers often ignored bullying of queer students, even when it was brought to their attention. One student said of the administration, "if there is other bullying going on, they'll deal with it to a huge extent... whereas when it comes down to this sort of subject, [they are] a little bit more, oh it's alright." One teacher expressed a similar view of the principal's reaction to queer students being bullied: "I don't think he's pleased to even have gay students as part of the school. I mean, he'd pay lip service, but he's happy to let the students bully each other." Another student stated that going to a religious school made it difficult for him to know whether it was acceptable to ask for help. He said that his counsellor "basically said that I need to become stronger, stand in the mirror and pretend to be superman. I mean yes, that may help, but it doesn't give me real solutions. ALL the staff need to be educated on the correct procedures, and follow through on making sure the student feels safe in the school."

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A few students even expressed the feeling that some staff blamed them for being bullied. One student said of her principal, "it's more the fact that he thinks it's our fault that we're getting bullied than their fault for finding something to bully us on." Some staff responses seemed to reflect this displacement of responsibility. When asked about the risks a queer student might face, one counsellor from a rural-Otago school wrote, "If they were foolish enough to make it generally known that they were a GLTBQ student or if they tried to encourage any other person into their way of thinking they could be faced with ridicule through to physical harm." Other staff members spoke of "forward" boys who were "rampantly" or "extravagantly" gay, or who "flaunted" their homosexuality in a way that provoked aggression. On top of a general fear of outing themselves, the worry that staff members might blame them or fail to take them seriously may be a barrier that prevents some queer students from reporting bullying and violence. As one student put it, "I know of people who just wouldn't go to teachers about things like being teased for being gay or things like that, just because they don't think that they'd be accepting enough or that they'd take the piss out of them or something or just not care. A lot more goes on than the teachers actually realise because half the people that it happens to just won't go to the teachers."

Safety in Our Schools argues that bullying and prejudice toward queer students can: "distract a student from study and work; result in absenteeism and truancy; impact negatively on school or job performance; damage personal and work relationships; affect morale, and physical and mental health" (p.15). This research found that these impacts hold true for Otago students. Nearly one in four survey respondents stated that they had skipped school out of a fear that someone might hurt, tease, or bully them for being queer or being perceived as queer. Others related that they had considered staying home for the same reason. One student wrote that he was bullied so badly that he simply stayed home for much of third and fourth form. He said that he was afraid to tell his teachers or counsellors about the bullying because he attends a religious school. Another student wrote that "bullying stays on my mind all the time so bad that I can't focus on anything else. Sometimes I'd be too scared to come to school." A few students even stated that they'd left school or transferred as a result of homophobic bullying.

For other students, the risk of bullying was not enough to keep them from attending school, but it did impact their mood, attention levels, and academic performance. One student wrote that, when bullied, "I can become distracted and don't enjoy being in school. I can lose interest and not perform as well in tests." Another added, "it makes it a lot harder. Even though you can focus on your work, you spend most of the time worrying about when the next 'attack' will be and what it will be." Other respondents cited an inability to pay attention, getting behind in their subjects, being hurt and upset during class, and becoming depressed and less interested in school. In addition, several students wrote that, while they are not personally bullied, they find it distracting when other students are subject to bullying at school.

In contrast, a number of students stated that they are not hugely impacted by bullying, either because they don't experience it often or because they consciously ignore attempts to harass them. One focus group participant stated that "high school is just five years when we're thrown together, all together where we have to be with people, whereas as soon as you leave, you don't have see of those people again. You can go and hang out with whoever you want, whoever accepts you, whoever you like. I think high school is a time to grin and bear it and then move on." He acknowledged, however, that his school environment is less harsh than some and a "grin and bear it" technique might not work for queer students who face violence in their schools. Furthermore, there are some queer students who lament the divisions that prejudice and bullying create. One student wrote, "There's a real sense of division between the straight sporty boys and us queer guys in the form. Not sure what it is, but I just would like to feel a sense of unity."

At some schools, the idea of mixed social groups comprised of both queer and queer-friendly allies is a reality. Many respondents identified themselves as straight, but wrote about having close friends who are queer or questioning, and many queer-identified respondents referenced the support of straight friends. One survey question asked whether straight respondents feel safe and comfortable associating with students perceived to be queer at

school. While many students wrote that doing so might result in bullying, the perception that they too were queer, or the risk of a queer student developing romantic feelings for them, the majority of straight-identified respondents emphatically stated they would or they do associate with queer students. As one student put it, "The sort of people who have a problem with GLBTQ people don't like me anyway, and I don't like them, so it makes no difference whether or not I associate with them. Besides, they're my friends." That these students chose to participate in the survey suggests that they are potentially more positively disposed toward queer students than a typical high schooler would be. Nevertheless, it is important to note that there continues to be a significant number of straight students who are willing to befriend and support queer students, as well as school environments in Otago in which these allies face limited prejudice for doing so.

In addition, most students felt that the siblings of queer students at their schools were unlikely to be bullied. On the other hand, nearly all respondents thought that a student whose parent or parents were queer would face difficulties if the other students found out. One gave an example of a male student who has been relentlessly hassled by classmates because his father is gay. A few students even thought that a student with a queer parent or parents would face open prejudice from some staff members.

Separate from the direct bullying of queer students is the prevalent use of queer-related words as insults toward queer and non-queer students alike. The most common example is "gay", as in "that's so gay." Others include "fag", "dyke", "homo", "poofter", and "lezzie." Every student respondent and nearly every staff respondent agreed that these words are in frequent use at Otago high schools. There was not a consensus, however, as to whether this is a problem. For example, some students felt that the nearly blanket misuse of the word "gay" to mean "stupid" or "weird" has resulted in the adoption of these meanings as a secondary definition of "gay". One student wrote, "Words always get different meanings. For example 'That is so gay' means 'That looks stupid' these days." Some respondents suggested that this revised usage of the word is so ingrained that it should no longer be understood as offensive. One queer student stated "I even say things are 'gay' without thinking - just part of my teen vocab because everyone says it so much." The participants of the focus group agreed that they often used "gay" in their daily speech. A straight respondent viewed this as an indication that the use of such terms is acceptable: "the gay people use them too so it's fine."

Some of the staff interviewed similarly felt that the frequent use of this kind of language is not a major problem. One reason given was similar to the one students proposed: "gay" and the like are used so often and so casually that it's not practical to regard each instance as a behaviour issue. One teacher said, "'gay' is just so ingrained – someone stubs their toe and it's gay, they lose the rugby and it's gay. Everything's gay." A girls' school principal offered, "They'll say, 'Oh that song was gay' or 'That test was gay.' Everything's gay. It's kind of the same as 'like' or 'stuff.' It's just squeezed into their speech." The

result, said one counsellor, is that, "sometimes you just keep walking, because you hear so much of this nonsense." One student respondent agreed that "teachers are generally okay with it, seeing as it happens so often."

The other reason staff gave for not mounting a serious opposition to the use of queer-related terms as insults is that students aren't using them in a serious way. Nearly every staff respondent pointed out the disconnect between students' use of "gay", especially, and their knowledge of or feelings toward queer people. They did not feel that most students connect these words to sexuality. One counsellor said, "If you just think about it for a moment, you notice, of course, but at this point it's just an expression in common usage. It's derogatory but in a superficial way." Several counsellors noted that it is most often younger students, especially boys, who use these terms, and many may not even know what homosexuality is. Other students may be aware of sexuality-based meanings for "gay" or "queer" and may even recognise that their own speech overlaps with these meanings, but still may not mean any offence toward queer students. Some student respondents confirmed this. One wrote, "I think I say gay occasionally as in 'Ew that's gay' but I don't mean it in a homophobic way." Another said, "[those words] are standard insults, but not towards LGBTQ people." One counsellor explained that, "Sometimes, a student will use the word and then turn to a friend who they know is [queer] and say 'I don't mean you. You're okay.'" As a result of students' superficial understanding or awareness of the correlation between queer-related terms and queer people, many staff members regard this student conduct as simply "being silly" or "having a laugh" or "exchanging insults between themselves." Several students even stated that some of their teachers similarly use these terms. One teacher at a boys' school agreed: "There are other teachers who use that kind of language themselves. Homophobic and even racist language [...] I think they feel it helps them develop a rapport with the boys."

Other staff members regard the use of these words as a more significant problem. While many student respondents stated that their teachers did little in response to hearing students use "gay" or "fag" as insults, some reported being in classes in which teachers responded decisively. Some teachers classified this language as general misbehaviour and reacted accordingly. Others stopped the class to explain that these words have another context and that their use as generic "defective" words could potentially offend queer students. Still others have banned the use of the word "gay" in the classroom, replacing it with other random nonsense words. One teacher said, "The first lesson of the first class every year, I talk with the students about language. I say that racist, sexist, and homophobic language is just not on in my class. And sometimes they need the lesson repeated at the beginning of the next term." Another teacher said that she always comes back with, "'Is it really?' I just challenge it whenever I hear it. We have discussions about it all the time with the kids [...] They need to be reminded of what it means, to have their thinking challenged." Although few teachers have been offered instructions on how to deal with this sort of language, one counsellor

said of the staff at his school, "most of them will say something if they hear it used as a put down."

The biggest concern voiced by the staff respondents who were alarmed by the prevalent misuse of queer-related words was the atmosphere it creates for queer students. One counsellor said that she was worried "that it creates an environment that silences exploration and wondering and drives it underground [...] it doesn't create the right atmosphere." Another teacher spoke of the damage it can do to a student to hear a word she identifies with herself used constantly to mean "bad." The comments of a number of student respondents reflected the consequences of this misuse of language. One wrote, "It makes you feel as though you're always bad for being gay." A questioning student added that, "It feels like not just an insult to the person it's said to but the people in the GLBTQ community." A third student wrote, "I went through a stage of massive denial and self loathing before I accepted my sexuality, and the attitude of gay as being a bad thing reinforced that, especially the language, insults etc. used among your friends when you are fifteen."

"I went through a stage of massive denial and self-loathing before I accepted my sexuality, and the attitude of gay as being a bad thing reinforced that, especially the language..."

A further concern is the policing effect that these words and general homophobia may have on all students. As one respondent wrote, "Unfortunately the gay label is often used as a weapon to single others out." Students may apply the term to anyone who breaks from socially acceptable norms. And, as one principal of an all-male school acknowledged, "The worst thing that one of our boys can say to another is, you're gay." In this way, homophobia becomes a tool of peer pressure that may be wielded against any student, queer or not. Students were asked what characteristics might cause a classmate to be labelled as "gay" or "queer" and nearly every respondent stated that it was a matter of being perceived as "weird" or "different." Specifically, students stated that hanging out with the "wrong" people, standing up for queer issues, having no friends of the opposite sex, having no friends of the same sex, listening to unpopular music, showing a lot of affection, not having a partner of the opposite sex, hugging friends, and dressing, walking, or talking differently were all qualities that might result in a student being singled out as queer. In addition, a girl who wore her hair short, played a lot of sports, held hands with a friend, or told a friend she loved her risked being labelled queer. Similarly, a boy who didn't show an interest in cars, guns, sport, or girls, took pride in his appearance, or wore pink, might be identified by his peers as queer. A number of respondents noted that a student would draw unwelcome homophobic attention through any deviation from high school gender norms.

Many of the staff respondents were concerned about the effects that homophobic attacks on any perceived difference have on students. One counsellor admitted, "Students sometimes feel that they have to prove they're not gay to other students." A teacher at an all-male school suggested that this is especially true of young men: "High school is such a time of working out your own identity but also just wanting to fit in. So if the crowd says this is what's masculine and normal, then you have to go with that." At times, this results in students taking part in high risk behaviours or even low risk behaviours they might not personally choose. For example, one counsellor wondered "if the boys especially are forcing themselves into straight sexual relationships to prove themselves and then wind up feeling guilty afterward." Another counsellor related that, "When the boys go away on camps, if a boy is scared about some activity [...] the other boys make fun of him and say homophobic things about him." Similarly, one teacher said, "If a boy looks like he's about to cry, then I'm right there trying to block the other boys from seeing him and then sort of guiding him out into the hallway. Because, if the guys see him crying, then everyone's going to hear about it and he'll get hassled." The culture created by homophobia has an effect on not just queer students, but all students. It conditions students to limit their interests and personal expression to those things that are sanctioned as "normal" and "gender-appropriate." It prevents many students from forming close friendships and support networks with classmates of the same sex. And it encourages male students especially to participate in potentially high risk activities in an effort to prove they are straight while, as one principal suggested, capable female students may feel pressured to embody submissive attitudes around young men.

To conclude this section on safety and bullying, survey respondents and staff were asked if they thought a queer student would feel safe at their schools. Some students were confident that all queer students would feel safe and others specified circumstances in which a queer student would be safe (among older students, among certain peer groups, if the student wasn't open about it, if the student was especially confident or well-liked, etc.) Others stated that a queer student would be physically safe, but would be likely to feel emotionally unsafe or to encounter verbal harassment. About a third of students wrote definitively that queer students would not feel safe at their schools.

Of the staff members, only a few felt confident that a queer student would feel entirely safe at their schools. Several others expressed the hope that such a student would feel safe, on the basis of having heard little about harassment of queer students, but admitted that they could not realistically assert that it didn't go on. As one principal put it, "I would hope it doesn't happen here, but I'm not complacent enough to think it doesn't." Other staff were confident that queer students would be safe from physical harassment but stated that they might face verbal abuse or feel emotionally unsafe. Still others viewed their school environments as physically dangerous for queer youth. One principal stated that "there would be elements in the school who would want to kick them around, figuratively speaking. And in some cases, that might get physical." Several staff members

agreed. One teacher said, "We have [number] boys, and probably [number] of them don't get worked up about this. But the other 100 might beat up a gay guy on the street. Maybe that's being a bit harsh. But really, I don't think they'd give it another thought."

According to a number of staff members, the difference between safety and danger for a queer student hinges on the degree of openness the student displays. In some schools, queer students might not encounter harassment, as long as they are not "too gay." One counsellor explained, "If you're openly gay in a particular way, rampantly or aggressively, like one boy was a few years ago, ready to fight anyone who had a problem with him, it didn't go well for him or for the cause really. It really complicated his life. Most kids keep it pretty quiet. And that's probably wise here." Others spoke of particular students who draw attention to themselves by being "extravagantly, colourfully gay." While the tone of some staff comments suggests a willingness to displace blame onto queer students who "put themselves in situations" in which they are abused, it is clear that some school environments are not safe for proud, open queer students. Several student respondents confirmed this. One wrote, "One of my friends moved down here from Auckland last year. She already had friends at this school, and it didn't take her long to come out to the rest of our group. Then she was outted to the rest of the school. Before, she said she was a lesbian. Now she says she's not sure. I think she thinks that she won't get teased as much for that."

At other schools, particularly though not exclusively rural schools, staff recommended that queer students would do best not to come out at all. One principal stated, "It would be a very brave boy who would declare himself. It would be a danger here." Another wrote that, while his school would certainly "go into overdrive" to offer support, he would not encourage a queer student to come out: "Frankly, a gay student in a small town is probably better off in the closet. I know that sounds terrible, but I think it would be very difficult to be openly gay." Some students, in Dunedin and elsewhere, echoed these sentiments. One student stated that she would like to come out at school, "but I know if I did that, I'd get a hell of a lot more bullying than I already get, and that would be too hard." Staff members from several schools related that they'd never had any queer students come out. One principal offered an explanation: "My guess is that, if we haven't had any boys declare themselves, then it must be that they've made a decision that it wouldn't be safe to do so."

The same may be true for gender diverse youth. Staff from all but a couple of schools asserted that they have no trans youth enrolled at present, and most said that they have never been aware of any trans students at their schools. While some staff made a distinction between having no trans students and not being aware of any trans students, many did not. Perhaps this reflects the view expressed by a few staff members that trans people often do not begin to question their gender identities until after adolescence. But in discussions with focus group participants, several laughed at the idea that staff would assume there were no trans students simply because no one was open about it. One student said, "How do they know if you're transgendered? I mean, if you're a guy but you really feel like a girl,

you still have to wear the guys' uniform. You can't wear a kilt. You can't go into the girls changing rooms, so really, they can't say, 'Aw we have no transgender [students].'" In addition to institutional rules that may prevent gender diverse students from being open, many may simply feel that it would be unsafe to do so. One counsellor recounted a focus group he'd had with students in which he talked about a student who was enrolled as male, but "wore the female uniform every day to one of the other co-ed Dunedin high schools. So I ask the students what they think would happen if he went here, and some of them say they'd beat him up, so that's probably a good indication." It is likely that the general lack of openly gender diverse students in Otago high schools is more a reflection of the danger present in school environments than of the non-existence of gender diverse students.

Recommendations: Bullying and Safety

Nearly 200 students offered suggestions on what their schools could do to improve the well-being and safety of queer students. One in six students called on their schools to "be stricter on bullying and exclusion based on sexuality or alleged sexuality." For male respondents, especially, this was a top priority, and recommendations came from queer and straight identified students alike. These included writing sexuality, gender, and gender diversity based bullying into zero-tolerance harassment policies and, just as importantly, enforcing these policies. Students advised that schools develop tough consequences for offenders, as well as specific procedures for dealing with bullying of queer students in classrooms and common areas. Respondents further suggested that schools ensure that teachers and other staff are familiar with these procedures and with the various forms that bullying may take. Finally, students stressed the importance of encouraging students to feel that it is acceptable, responsible, and even part of being a good friend when they report bullying they experience or witness. Schools should not necessarily regard a lack of reported homophobic bullying as proof that this kind of harassment does not go on, but should reinforce the systems by which students and staff may report bullying and ensure that students feel that they will be taken seriously and supported if they come forward.

School staff are encouraged to take a serious approach to the use of queer-related terms as insults. Even when straight students say these words to each other and without an awareness of their queer-based connotations, it still creates an unpleasant and potentially unsafe environment for queer students. In addition, the constant use of these words often has the effect of corraling all students into stereotyped gender norms, which limits students' possibilities and sometimes results in dangerous risk-taking behaviour, particularly among young men trying to prove they are straight. As much as is practical, it is recommended that teachers prohibit the use of these terms in their classrooms and draw students' attention to exactly why they are offensive. In addition, all staff members should attempt to curb students' queer-based offensive language in hallways, cafeterias, and other common spaces. Finally, under no circumstances should staff members use these queer-based insults or slang words. As one teacher said, "I think it's possible to have a rapport [with the students] but still just say, 'Hey we don't use that kind of language here.'" Teachers should try to model language that is free of homophobic and transphobic (as well as sexist and racist) terms.

In some schools, particularly in some of the higher decile schools, staff members cited a certain hesitancy to tackle queer issues in the school, for fear of appearing too queer-friendly. In one case, the issue was the school's affiliation with a Christian denomination that condemns homosexuality. In other cases, staff cited the administration's aversion to outstripping the community in terms of attitudes of acceptance: "It's a conservative community and this is a conservative school. So we're moving slowly on this area rather than leaping in boots and all." Other staff responses reflected the economic pressure to keep parents happy and the risks of presenting

liberal policies when “some of the [students] come from rather unliberal families.” One teacher explained, “It is a dollars and cents thing. Just getting the bums in the seats. The parents drive the education, and these are people who were born in the 50’s. What we should be saying is, ‘Look, this is how New Zealand’s education system is going to be, and if you don’t like it, you can move to some other country where they will teach your kids homophobia and racism.’” Unfortunately, the reality is that, while many staff members are eager and willing to take a stand against the targeted bullying of queer students, some schools continue to hold back as a concession to the Church, the community, or parents.

These schools, and all schools, are invited to take the recent announcement that ERO will now be checking up on schools’ strategies to combat homophobic bullying as a reason to be proactive. Schools wishing to fulfil the new ERO requirement will need to add and enforce processes and policies around sexuality, gender, and gender diversity based bullying to their anti-bullying documents. It is recommended that schools involve parents in the process by notifying them of the change and explaining the school’s legal responsibilities in this area. If necessary, schools might stress to disgruntled parents and community members that the impetus for increased support and protection for queer students comes from ERO and the Ministry of Education. (See also pp. 6-9 of *Safety in Our Schools* on how queer-friendly schools fit with other existing requirements, including NZ Bill of Rights and Human Rights legislation, national education goals, National Administration Guidelines, and Professional Standards for Teachers.) The important thing is that schools develop and enact these strategies, in spite of whatever Church, community, or parental pressure there may be to tolerate the bullying and marginalising of queer students and set aside the needs of queer young people. In addition, some schools may also wish to include parents by asking them to help students learn appropriate non-homophobic and non-transphobic language and behaviour by modelling such language and behaviour and correcting students when their language or behaviour is offensive.

Findings: Curriculum

On the topic of curriculum, *Safety in Our Schools* has this to say:

Education experiences that affirm the sexuality and gender diversity of students have the potential to have a positive effect on the educational opportunities and outcomes for these students, and to improve many aspects of their well-being/hauora. (p. 18)

The book advocates providing curricula that “value, acknowledge, and respect diverse queer identities and the diversity of families/whanau” as well as “multiple masculinities and femininities” (p. 18). Several student respondents noted that the absence of queer examples and historical figures in lessons or queer issues in class discussions reinforces the views that such topics are taboo and that queer people exist outside the boundaries of appropriate norms. Including queer subject matter in the curriculum could help to combat these views.

The bulk of student learning about queer issues and identities occurs in health class, if it occurs at all. Student accounts of health education varied widely across Otago high schools. Some students stated that they'd received a lot of information about sexual identity from a social perspective. One student wrote that her school's health curriculum “covers mostly everything that important and good to know about sexuality. We learn it's normal to be lesbian, gay, whatever.” Other students said that their health classes hadn't specifically discussed queer identities but “there was the idea that everyone is different but it's not a bad thing. Like, just to be accepting of it.” On the other side of the spectrum, two-thirds of student respondents stated that they'd received no health education at all about queer identities or issues. Even fewer students said that they'd received any sort of safe-sex information on same-sex intimacy. Only one in six respondents recollected learning anything in health class about safe-sex for queer people. One male student, who identified as queer, wrote that he just applied the lessons about straight sex to his own situation. But, as one queer-identified female student pointed out, at her school “the general message was ‘use a condom’ which isn't very helpful for lesbians.” Another female student agreed. She said, “I remember the first time I did something with a girl, I got such a shock because she was like, ‘Oh you've got to put this on.’ I was like, ‘What's that?’ And she was like, ‘It's a dental dam! Didn't you get told about that in health?’”

In speaking with several health teachers and counsellors who were knowledgeable about the health curriculum it was agreed that, from a “how-to of the anatomy” perspective, only straight sex was covered. Most specified, however, that they were careful to use the term “partner” and to avoid using male or female pronouns when discussing sex, so as to encompass all possibilities. Several also stated that, in discussions of STIs and their transmission, they don't align particular conditions, such as HIV, exclusively with either queer or

straight populations. In addition, staff members believed that health teachers would certainly address the topic if a student were to ask about it in class.

In contrast to a large share of the student respondents, many staff respondents felt confident that students were receiving information on queer identities in health class. One counsellor said that his school's health curriculum covers "differences ranging from being gay to being asexual. The main message is that this is a normal lifestyle. It's not abnormal. And the students are usually quite interested. They've never gotten to really talk about it before, just comments and jokes." One rural-Otago counsellor proudly described a workshop on homophobia that her school holds for Year 10 students. Another counsellor and health teacher talked about a book she read to students about a straight boy living in a queer world and the discussion and thinking the book prompted. Others cited health modules on sexuality, differences, sexual health, stereotyping, gender, and relationships, though some staff admitted that the queer aspects of these modules sometimes receive "more of a once over lightly." One counsellor explained that, at his school, "it's all mostly implicit rather than explicit. We almost shy away from it at times [...] it's a delicate balance, taking students as far as they're comfortable, without pushing too far." Some staff mentioned the "question box" section of the health curriculum, in which students can submit anonymous questions to be answered, as a time when sexual orientation questions come up and are addressed in a safe and sensitive manner. A number of staff members also noted that the speakers they bring in from Family Planning, Rape Crisis, Otago University Student Health, the New Zealand AIDS Foundation, and Sexwise are invaluable assets to their students' health education. In many cases, these speakers are much closer in age to the students than are their health teachers, and are better able to connect and to deliver more challenging information, on queer topics and other issues. Bringing in speakers from outside organisations also provides links for students, should they wish to access further information outside of their school environments.

Survey respondents were asked what impact they think that receiving (or not receiving) information about queer sexuality and/or safe sex in health class has on queer students. Several respondents reiterated the idea that hearing about queer issues normalises them and makes queer identities more acceptable, while not hearing about queer issues "probably makes them feel as though they have to keep their sexuality secret." Some students also suggested that not including queer identities in health class makes queer students feel left out and prevents them from knowing what is out there for them. Speaking specifically about safe-sex information, several respondents stated that a lack of education could have a dangerous impact if queer students "don't know enough information to make the right decisions." Additionally, a few students noted that not introducing queer safe-sex information in the classroom may make queer students feel less able to talk with friends and gain further information about sexual matters in the way that straight students do. Other respondents identified benefits to be gained by straight students, as well. One wrote that not receiving education about queer students

means that “we don’t actually realise how to deal with them if they aren’t particularly our friends in the first place.” Though a conversation in the classroom about sexual orientation might initially be uncomfortable for both queer and straight students, the outcome might be increased comfort and understanding between queer students and their peers.

Members of the focus group were asked whether they felt that it was worth the awkwardness to achieve a more inclusive sexual health curriculum. The majority of participants felt that it was. One student thought a cursory explanation of queer sexuality was sufficient, as “most people learn it anyway.” Another student suggested teaching about it subtly: “Like mentioning these are dental dams. They can be used for safe oral sex and they can also be used for woman to woman contact. Maybe just mentioning it subtle like that would work.” Another thought that, if the students didn’t bring up the topic of queer sexuality, “the teacher should bring it up, just so that everybody knows.” The participants felt that it would be important not to single out the queer students at any point in such a lesson, so as to avoid unnecessary discomfort, but that, overall, it would be worthwhile to educate students on queer sexuality. As one student said of sexual health class, “They’re already snickering anyway.”

Staff from three of Otago’s five religious schools elected to talk about their schools’ religious curriculums. Neither queer sexuality nor gender diversity was a particular focus of any of these curriculums, and staff stated that, where these topics do come up, they are handled sensitively and are not portrayed in a negative light. One religion teacher said, “When we talk about marriage, we talk about the spectrum of relationships that are out there, and people’s attitudes toward them. So it comes up, but only in a small section of one class.” Another religion teacher explained, “There’s the religious education program, which is in the broadest sense of the word. It’s mostly about self-awareness, and it’s not exclusive at all. The philosophy that underlies the programme is that God is love and you are lovable.” The instructor went on to discuss how the religious curriculum approaches sexuality. “We talk about how sexuality is a part of being human, and we keep trying to reinforce that. We talk about relationships being about the whole person. They get lots of messages, but mainly just, ‘You’re okay how you are.’” The counsellor of a third religious high school stated that, “The religious instruction is very liberal [...] some of the community is fundamentalist. But that’s a small minority. We have a chaplain, as well, and I think he would be quite comfortable talking about this.”

Most student respondents who attend religious high schools agreed that queer topics rarely feature in religious studies classes and that any mention of queer issues is non-judgmental. One student stated that “the teacher in charge of religious studies is very accepting, so if anything was mentioned it would not be discriminatory. Even though it’s a Christian school, this teacher takes the view that we need to learn about, understand, and accept other religions and she teaches accordingly. I’m sure she would do the same thing when talking

about gender identity, etc.” And, while several students said that attending a religious school made being openly queer or seeking support more challenging, only one respondent cited prejudicial teaching in religion class specifically. (Readers should note, however, that anecdotes on challenging religious school environments mainly came from students attending the two religious schools that chose not to participate in this research. The content and tone of those schools’ religious curriculums may be different than those presented here.)

The majority of student respondents could not recall any instance in which a class lesson had contained queer or gender diverse material or referenced queer or trans examples.

As discussed earlier, *Safety in Our Schools* recommends including material on queer and gender diverse topics in the general curriculum, as well as opportunities for students to discuss queer issues. The suggestion is not that queer subject matter should be given special attention, but simply that it should be incorporated into larger lessons and discussions instead of being marginalised as taboo. The idea is that, by presenting queerness as just another element on the spectrum of human diversity and by including relatable examples and personages, students will begin to shed prejudices based on concepts of queer people as freakish or sick. At the same time, queer students are likely to feel included and more apt to engage with curriculum topics.

The majority of student respondents could not recall any instance in which a class lesson had contained queer or gender diverse material or referenced queer or trans examples. Even fewer had experienced a class discussion on queer topics, excepting in some health classes. Some students, however, gave examples of ways in which teachers had managed to include queer components in their classes. A few students had watched *Billy Elliot*, *Heavenly Creatures*, and *Brokeback Mountain* in film classes and engaged in class discussions on queer elements of these films. One student referenced a discussion of homosexuality in Greek and Roman culture in her classics class. Another recalled an essay topic pertaining to homosexuality, while another respondent wrote that queer issues occasionally came up as debate topics. One student had even chosen to give a presentation on gay rights in a social studies class.

Because the curriculums for subjects in which queer topics are most likely to come up are often quite open-ended, many principals and counsellors could not definitively say whether teachers were including these topics in their lessons. Nevertheless, several of the staff members interviewed were able to name specific instances of the inclusion of queer topics in classes. One English teacher taught *Blue Lawn*, a book about two high school boys who fall in love. A drama teacher regularly discussed queer aspects of plays. A media studies

class talked about marketing effectiveness in relation to the entire range of sexualities. A church history class touched on homosexuality as it related to the persecution of witches. A history teacher went over the treatment of homosexuals in World War II. Several social studies classes discussed gay rights movements. Another class talked about fa'afafine in Samoan culture. In addition, some staff, while unable to come up with specific instances in which queer topics were discussed, could envision classes and situations in which they could potentially be incorporated into existing lessons. These included classes on history, contemporary social studies, English, drama, film, and art history.

Class subject matter is not, however, the only element that determines whether queer topics might be included. A number of staff pointed out that it is dependent, in part, on the comfort level teachers have with queer subjects. Many were confident that at least a few teachers would be comfortable enough to cover queer topics and to facilitate class discussions sensitively. Other teachers might not broach the subject, but would be able to tackle it if it arose. As one principal said, "The teacher is there to answer intelligent queries from students, so if it was an intelligent question, the teacher would answer it." But some teachers would simply be uncomfortable with any discussion of queer topics. One counsellor explained that, at his school, "most people would shy away from it. I think that's probably better, though, if they can't do it sensitively, that they not do it at all." Another consideration is the maturity level of students. As one principal pointed out, there is "a big difference between year 9 and year 13 students in their levels of understanding and emotional maturity." One respondent confirmed "I think that [queer examples] would probably get the senior students talking and discussing the issues, and most of the junior students would have giggling fits." The inclusion of various queer examples would therefore have to be sensitive and age-appropriate. Some of the focus group participants added that, as maturity is not always correlated with age, even some senior classes contain students who might respond childishly to queer references. Finally, while the inclusion of queer examples and discussions is intended to increase acceptance and understanding among students, in some environments, prejudice against queer people might be so extreme that it would be unsafe for students to engage in open discussions on queer topics. A few staff members stated that this is the case at their schools and recommended that such discussions be contained to small focus groups led by the counsellor.

Student response on the impacts of including queer subject matter in school curriculum was mixed. Some students felt that it would have a positive effect overall in normalising queer identities and helping students better understand queer issues. One respondent stated, "I think it would bring it out into the open a bit more. Right now it's not really talked about with teachers and stuff as part of any curriculum, and I think it would benefit students to know that it can be talked about and it isn't a bad thing or anything." Some queer students expressed that they appreciated it when teachers brought up queer topics. One said, "It makes me feel included because it's like, 'Yay! Someone's not afraid to teach the L word or the B word or the G word.'" Other respondents worried that queer students might feel

singled out or experience bullying as a result. One focus group participant said that this was his experience when a queer topic came up in English class: "Everyone like looked at me [...] I felt this big." Respondents stressed the importance of keeping the discussion general and not focusing on queer members of the class. One queer student suggested: "I think talking about it, but not in terms of us – 'How do you feel about that, you being one of them?' Not like that. But just treat us like another student and we can all talk about it in an abstract sort of way rather than, 'Everyone else doesn't know, so educate them' kind of thing." A large share of respondents thought that students, whether queer or not, would probably feel slightly uncomfortable at first, but many felt that this was just part of the process. One thing that did not seem to worry students (though it did concern a few staff members and, they suggested, a large number of parents) was the idea that including queer topics in class might "turn" students queer. While respondents acknowledged that a greater acceptance of and exposure to queer identities might allow some students to come out earlier than they otherwise would, all but a few definitively rejected or openly ridiculed the fear that straight students would "learn to be queer" in the classroom.

Recommendations: Curriculum

The number one response given by the nearly 200 youth who offered suggestions on how schools could improve the well-being and safety of queer students was education. Over one-fourth of respondents called for more open discussion of and education around queer topics. Some students recommended specific workshops, assemblies, seminars, and guest speakers for students to learn about homophobia and acceptance. Most stressed the importance of providing this education to all students, and potentially more than once. One student wrote, "Educate other non GLBTQ students as well, so they understand the problems they might be causing through their discrimination." Other respondents felt that this sort of education could easily be incorporated into the health curriculum during lessons on accepting differences. Many specified, however, that in order to raise awareness of the issue, health teachers must "speak more openly about it, so it isn't so taboo. Show that it is something not to be afraid of." Other students confirmed that they would like to hear more about queer identities and issues throughout the curriculum, so that these topics become more commonplace and "so everyone can understand and help [queer] and gender diverse students be more accepted."

It is recommended that staff members begin to incorporate queer content into high school curriculums where possible. This may begin with more inclusive topic matter in health classes, in both diversity/acceptance-type modules and sexuality modules. It is important that all students hear messages that queer sexualities and gender diversity are normal, valuable aspects of the human spectrum of diversity. It is also crucial that queer students receive information on safe-sex. If health teachers feel that presenting such information to the class would create an unsafe environment for queer students, it could be appropriate to order queer sex specific resources from the New Zealand AIDS Foundation, Family Planning, or OUTTHERE! and distribute these to all students along with whatever other materials are passed out to the class. Counsellors and health nurses should also have these resources on hand for students. Additionally, many Otago high schools already involve guest speakers from a range of organisations in their health curriculums, to the benefit of staff and students. Many staff members, including a few health teachers, said that "it would be great to have someone coming in and giving a lesson [on queer issues] to the health class, the way that the Rape Crisis people come in and talk about harassment." It is recommended that high schools raise the issue with those organisations that already send guest speakers to their health classes, as many may be able to add queer content to their talks or give an additional talk on queer topics. Finally, community groups are encouraged to consider hosting sexual health information workshops specifically for queer students. For example, PFLAG South could team up with Family Planning to provide a confidential one-off presentation of sexual health topics to PFLAG's Same/Difference youth group and any other interested queer students.

The gradual inclusion of more queer content into general high school curriculums is recommended. Many staff members noted that this

could be the site of some improvements, confirming that queer subject matter could come in “naturally as part of the education in various subjects – social studies, religious studies, civil rights, talking about various types of families.” Others agreed that having “role-modelling opportunities embedded in the curriculum in art, history, and English” could provide part of the solution to “the dilemma of role models,” or rather, the dearth of queer role models as compared to straight role models and the profusion of negative queer stereotypes. As discussed, exposure to, and awareness of, a variety of queer identities and issues helps to normalise queer topics and increases acceptance of queer people. An important component of this must also be the inclusion of gender diverse and culturally diverse examples. High school curriculums should strive to present a wide range of representations of queer people. There is no one way to be queer, and guaranteeing that a variety of representations are included helps to avoid both stereotyping and the marginalisation of non-white and gender diverse queer students. For examples of some ways that schools can incorporate diverse queer content into their curriculums, see the schools section of www.lgbthistorymonth.org.uk, as well as the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network’s educator library at www.glsen.org and Rainbow Youth’s list of queer resources for New Zealand secondary schools at www.rainbowyouth.org.nz/resources/library.

Findings: Teachers and Staff

In this section, more so than in any other section, it is difficult to make generalisations based on the input collected from a relatively small number of students. Realistically, student opinions refer to only a small portion of the total number of staff members employed at Otago high schools. The following accounts are included as examples of varying degrees of strength in working with queer students.

Of the high schools whose staff members were interviewed, the guidance departments seemed generally strong. Counsellors spoke of regular meetings with teachers, students who self-referred or referred friends to the guidance department, mental health and lifeskills modules, links with a variety of community organisations, working relationships with parents, involvement in discipline matters, and strong publicity in the school. Principals and counsellors agreed that the guidance department would be the first port of call for queer students seeking support. Similarly, of the 200 students who identified sources of support for queer students, over half suggested the school counsellor. Furthermore, survey respondents were generally confident that counsellors would be discreet and confidential about sensitive matters such as these. But when asked if they would personally be comfortable talking with a school counsellor about queer issues, over half of survey respondents said no. The experiences of counsellors reflect this. While many counsellors met regularly with queer students, several admitted that they'd rarely, if ever, had students talk with them about being queer. One student respondent explained that her reticence sprung from a disinclination "to trust anyone associated with the school's management where GLBTQ issues are involved." Another respondent said that her counsellor made a joke out of it when she tried to come out to him. Another said, "some counsellors can actually be really quite insensitive about it [...] they should have like a person that you can go to for that particular subject because they need someone who actually knows their stuff." Some counsellors agreed that queer-friendliness was not a guaranteed quality. One said, "You would hope that all counsellors would be gay-friendly, but of course that's not so."

Understanding that some students simply may not connect with their school counsellors, survey respondents were asked if there were any other adults at school whom they would feel comfortable approaching for support. Again, over half of respondents said no, while others named teachers they knew to be queer or queer-friendly. When school staff members were asked if there were teachers that would be supportive if a queer student needed to talk, most could think of a few who would be, as well as a few who would not be. Several staff members and students pointed out that students are generally able to sense which teachers would be best to approach. Many students reported good experiences in talking with staff. One said, "There's one teacher that I confided in about my sexuality and he was really okay with it, he thought it was fine, he was a great support and a great help." Other experiences were less

successful: "I always felt a close bond with ---. She was like my other mother, and I thought I could confide in her because I was really upset about something that had happened. And I told her I was bi and ever since that, she treats me horribly." Other students stated that they preferred not to discuss the matter with anyone at school, choosing instead to access queer support websites. A number of counsellors cited the internet as a growing source of support for queer students, as are community queer groups, such as PFLAG South's youth group.

Safety in Our Schools recommends that teachers and other staff avoid using heterosexist language. This includes speaking in a way that takes as a default that the whole world is straight and falls neatly into male and female gender categories, making assumptions about the sexual orientation or gender identity of students or their families, and implying in any way that straight or normatively gendered people are superior to queer people. As several student respondents pointed out, the basic structure of single-sex schools and of classes in which students are split into male and female groups makes the assumption that all students are either male or female and identify with their birth sex. But, in terms of staff language, only about half of students felt that staff members assumed that the world is straight and binary-gendered, an assumption that one student noted is common with any group of people. Another student attributed this tendency to a generation gap: "A lot of the teachers come from that era where everyone was 'supposed' to be straight and anyone that wasn't was not supposed to talk about it." Just over a third of students felt that their school staff made open assumptions about the sexuality and gender identity of students and their families. When this did occur, it seemed to be largely an extension of heterosexist beliefs about the world in general. One student from an all-female school explained that "teachers at my school, if they're mentioning it, they will always say something about boyfriends, and nothing about girlfriends or whatever. It is assumed that all the girls in our school are straight. And when they talk about our families, they will say your mother and your father, or just your mother or your father. Nothing about same-sex parents or anything like that." One in five students cited an experience in which a staff member had asserted or strongly implied the superiority of straight or normatively gendered people. In one of the more extreme examples, a teacher issued an apology to his class the day after saying "that all queers are child molesters and should be lined up in a row and shot." Others cited a lax attitude toward the bullying of queer students. On the whole, however, most students seemed satisfied that school staff did not overtly favour heteronormative archetypes.

Included in the ever-lengthening list of terms for queer identities are a number of terms that refer to queer identities within specific cultural groups (e.g. takataapui, fa'afafine.) Assuming that all queer identities conform to western models risks erasing or marginalising other sorts of queerness and the youth who identify with them. Students were asked whether school staff use correct terms for queer and gender diverse identities, including culturally appropriate terms. Separate from the previously discussed tendency of some staff to use queer-related words when bantering with students, two-thirds of

respondents confirmed that, when staff members do have cause to mention queer issues, they use correct terminology. A few students stated that, while teachers certainly don't use offensive words in this context, most stick to strictly western terms such as "homosexual." One student wrote of her teachers, "They would probably just say 'gay' or other appropriate but well known words. They probably wouldn't know 'culturally appropriate' words, but most would make the effort to use them if they were told which words they should use."

With the exception of the previously mentioned student, who felt that the teacher in whom she confided now treats her badly, none of the student respondents reported any situations in which school staff treated them unfairly because they were queer or were perceived to be queer. One student did, however, state that a teacher drew unnecessary attention to her sexual orientation by asking her questions about it in class. Such a practice is not necessarily discriminatory and may, in fact, be intended to include queer students or to normalise queer identities, but it is likely to make many queer students feel uncomfortable and may result in bullying from other students.

Although this research was undertaken with the assumption that staff were aware of the guidelines that *Safety in Our Schools* offered, the reality is that most Otago high school staff members have received no training on issues that impact queer young people. Of the staff respondents, only a handful had ever heard of "Safety in Our Schools," though a few counsellors had copies of similar booklets. When asked what training, recommendations, or professional development opportunities staff had been offered to learn about providing a safe and supportive environment for queer youth, the responses were mixed. A number of counsellors cited discussions with other local counsellors, as well as national guidance conferences at which queer topics often came up. Some of the careers, health and PE teachers had similar opportunities at national seminars. Locally, however, there were fewer opportunities, especially for teachers. One counsellor said that her school's staff was meant to have done the 2001 PPTA kit, but never did. Another counsellor noted that staff receive training on a variety of important topics, but queer issues haven't yet been included. Some teachers stated that they'd received no training at all, or could only recollect a student presentation or two back at teachers' college.

Other staff members have had more opportunities. At one rural-Otago high school, the New Zealand AIDS Foundation had facilitated a yearly staff workshop. At another rural-Otago school, the guidance department provided staff with recommendations on how to deal with the topic. Another high school did some staff education involving case studies a few years ago, when bullying of queer students was becoming particularly vicious. Also a few years back, a group of staff members from one high school went independently to a presentation on queer issues at Family Planning. In terms of securing training for a group of staff members at a school, however, the decision seems to rest largely with the principal. Some principals expressed a desire to take advantage of any training that might be available. One said, "We haven't come across much locally, but we'd be prepared to invest the time and money if there was." Others

seemed less eager. One principal said, "I don't see it as particularly necessary. It doesn't appear to be a problem." Another principal, whose impression of the extent to which bullying impacted his school's environment differed markedly from what was described by his students, stated, "We have a reactive rather than a proactive approach. Why tackle something like that if it's not necessary? If we felt it was a problem, we'd act." According to other staff, in many cases, the principal's word is final when it comes to training opportunities available within the school.

For many staff members, the impact of not having training available is that they "don't really know what to say." As one teacher put it, "I'm open and I'm interested, but I don't know how to go about it." Aware that queer students may be feeling vulnerable, many teachers and other staff "say nothing in fear of saying the wrong thing." One counsellor compared discussions of queer issues to discussions of racism or sexism, explaining that many people would prefer to avoid such topics entirely until they feel completely educated and at ease with them. This is especially true when students are involved. "Our own comments and beliefs are huge. If we get it wrong, it could have a huge impact on the kids. We want to know the right words to use and approaches to take." Several staff members acknowledged that education on queer issues has the potential to be as awkward for staff as it is for students. One counsellor commented, "Maybe it would be a forced exercise, maybe it would be uncomfortable, maybe it's unnecessary." Another agreed that some staff members are more secure than others. "Some probably don't want to hear anything about it. It would be threatening to them. But a lot of the staff would be quite interested." The comments of most of the staff members seemed to reflect this balance: though it might be uncomfortable initially, the benefits of receiving training on how to support queer students and approach queer subject matter would outweigh any awkwardness involved.

Recommendations: Teachers and Staff

The main potential improvement staff members identified was training for teachers and other staff. Realistically, staff cannot be expected to feel comfortable integrating queer content into the curriculum, addressing fully the widespread harassment of queer students, or even shedding heterosexist assumptions and language patterns without some form of education around the topics that impact queer youth. If schools are to be safe for queer students, staff must receive training. Furthermore, providing professional development opportunities for staff to become familiar with the particular challenges queer students face is both advantageous for staff, in that it increases their knowledge of and comfort with the topic, and a smart approach for schools. As one principal said, "We would want staff to be able to deal with it in the classroom, and the staff would want to know how to handle it." Another staff member compared this to the basic training staff members receive when a young person with a particular physical or mental challenge or even simply a strong food allergy joins the student body. It is in the school's best interest for its staff to be prepared, even if becoming prepared is initially uncomfortable for some.

As a first step, a few staff members suggested that staff read through some guidelines for ensuring a safe and queer-friendly school. As most staff have not had an opportunity to look over "Safety in Our Schools," that would be a good starting point. As one counsellor said, reading about best practice cases "helps [us] to reflect on our own environment and get ideas." A few copies were distributed to each of the Dunedin schools. Though this is not an exhaustive list, other useful guides include the Post Primary Teachers' Association resource, *Making Schools Safe for People of Every Sexuality* and the Family Planning Association's recently revised *Affirming Diversity*. In addition, staff should have a look at *To Be Who I Am*, the Human Rights Commission's report on transgender New Zealanders. A PDF of the report is available from the resources section at www.hrc.co.nz. The American site for the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network, www.glsen.org, is also recommended as a useful resources.

Most staff members agreed that it would be most productive for staff to meet together in a workshop-type setting to learn about how best to support queer students. Some suggested that it would work best for staff to be trained as a school, while others felt that it would be most effective for "cluster groups of guidance counsellors and curriculum heads" from several schools to meet together. One counsellor even suggested that workshops be done in conjunction with other "people who work with youth, liaising with PFLAG and other groups." Regardless of which model suits schools best, it is suggested that they begin by contacting a health promoter at Family Planning in Dunedin to request professional training. In addition, schools should keep an eye out for other opportunities to learn about and discuss ways to support queer youth, including SS4Q (Safety in Schools for Queers) conferences, OUTTHERE! workshops, and PPTA events. Queer and queer-friendly organisations

headquartered on the North Island are urged not to overlook the needs of Otago high schools, especially in terms of creating practical opportunities for staff training.

The establishment of a paid position in Otago to coordinate the various aims set forth in "Safety in Our Schools," especially that of teacher and staff training around the topic, is recommended. The idea that this could be a joint endeavour of several community groups was a popular one with the staff who participated in this research. Staff members suggested a number of roles for such a person in their schools, including providing or organising opportunities for school employees to become more familiar with the specific needs and challenges of queer students. Additionally, a paid 'Safety in Schools Coordinator' might assist teachers in establishing curriculum links and organise support for teachers in terms of health curriculum delivery. Staff saw definite advantages to involving an outside contact in both staff training and curriculum delivery, pointing to the potential for queer role-modelling for students and staff and the proactive message it would send about "the promotion of social justice and non-discriminatory practices throughout the school."

Such a position was also envisioned by staff as an "external source of support to put kids in contact with." As one principal framed it, "It's lonely to come out or to feel like you don't understand what's happening to you. Our school is open, but the girls still don't really talk about this. So who can they talk to?" Half of student respondents stated that they would not feel comfortable going to see their school counsellors for support, and school staff confirmed this reality, as well as the need for other opportunities. Several staff members advised that a queer support person could come into each school once every week or two to meet with queer and questioning students. One teacher suggested, "They could work with the students, like the health nurse does. It would be another opportunity. Even just one hour a week, if that's all the funding there was, would be very beneficial." Other staff recommended that the same person who assists in delivering the queer aspects of the sexual health curriculum might make him or herself available once a week during lunch. One counsellor explained, "If students don't want to be seen visiting the worker they have a face they can contact outside school because the worker would be involved in the health programme. This gives students someone tangible to relate to." And while the staff of a few schools felt that students would not utilise such an opportunity, overall, staff members seemed confident that such a person would find more than enough to do in supporting students and staff, and most heartily welcomed the establishment of such a role.

In the interim, however, schools should continue to encourage students to seek support from trusted, understanding adults, including but not limited to, the school counsellor. Staff should also be familiar with local private counsellors with particular reputations for being queer-friendly and ready to pass their details along to queer and questioning students wishing to seek outside support. There is also an established PFLAG Same-Difference youth group for queer and questioning youths under the age of 20 that staff should be aware of. It is recommended that schools publicise information for support

groups and phone helplines, such as Youthline and Outline. Finally, schools should consider offering some training on this issue to peer mediators and other senior students, as a number of respondents identified these students as potential sources of support or points of contact for queer students.

Findings: General School Environment

As suggested earlier, one measure of how welcoming and affirming a school environment is toward queer people is the degree to which there is a queer "presence" in the school. Are there students and/or staff members who are "out" and are they accepted by their peers? This question was put to students and staff. Nearly two-thirds of students stated that there were students or groups of students who were out at their schools and experienced varying levels of acceptance. One student explained, "Yeah there are definitely groups and individuals that are gay. Some are 'out' to everyone. Others are, but only to their close friends, and other queer students." Another related that it had initially been an issue for one queer couple, but quickly became old news: "Yeah, a girl in my year recently came out as being in a relationship with another student. They got a few weird looks and a bit of gossip (what do you expect for an all girls school?) but after a day everyone was over it and was happy for them." Other respondents reported that there was no queer presence at school. Students acknowledged that there were likely to be queer students, but "it's all very hush hush." Some staff reflected on the impact of having or not having a queer presence among students at school. Several suggested that having a group of confident queer students helped to normalise it in the minds of other students. A few recalled "high-flying" students who had come out as queer and the positive effect this had on other queer students and on the student body in general. One counsellor said, "Some of the highest achieving students at our school have been gay. I hope that's because it's a place of acceptance, where they feel free to be themselves and to stand out, to stand up."

The topic of openly queer staff proved a bit more controversial. Nearly half of the student respondents were aware of out teachers at their schools. Staff, too, were often able to think of a few past or present staff members who were out as queer, at least to other staff, and often to students, as well. Many students stated that queer teachers were accepted and respected by most students, "although there are occasionally a few jokes made by younger students." For some queer staff, then, it seems that it is safe to be out at school. A number of staff members confirmed this. One counsellor said, "We have gay staff members as well, and they're worthy, well-respected, much loved." Another staff member from a rural-Otago school said of an openly queer colleague, "Considering it's a rural school, ---'s had very few issues." A staff member who self-identified as queer cited the support of other staff in maintaining a safe environment for queer employees: "There was a hint of [prejudice] once, at the beginning, when I started here. And the principal said, 'Tell me who it is. I'll come down like a ton of bricks.'" In turn, supportive staff members seemed often to appreciate the role that queer staff play in broadening students' conceptions of queerness. As one principal explained, "I think it's good that we have a gay staff member. That helps to break down the stereotypes." And, while not all queer staff would relish the opportunity to serve as role models or to support queer or questioning students, some are willing to lend an "ear quite openly to students" and feel that they have the support to do so.

But not all openly queer staff members have positive experiences. One counsellor recalled a former teacher, who was out to the staff, but not to the students: "One of the boys found out and made his life hell. Eventually, the teacher said, 'Well I've had enough of this' and he left." A queer identified teacher recounted a similar experience: "The last school I taught at was horrible. That was the reason I left. I was getting sexual harassment from the students and no support from the staff [...] The problem is that, as soon as a few kids and parents find out, there's that stigma – What are they teaching our kids?" In addition to parental concerns about "teaching their kids to be gay," many queer staff have to combat stereotypes of queer adults, particularly queer men, as sexual predators. One teacher elaborated: "It would be hard to be a gay teacher at our school. The slightest thing and the students think you're coming on to them. There's that attitude that a gay man is going to be attracted to every man or boy he meets, and so the boys look for it, and that can ruin someone's career." As a result of these prejudices, many queer staff members do not feel that it is safe to be open, in some cases, even to other staff. Others, though out, feel that it would be a professional risk to give support to queer or questioning students. One counsellor explained that "because it's such a delicate thing, [queer staff] are especially careful about boundaries when students come to talk with them about it. They make referrals on for the student. That's the safe thing for the staff." Some student respondents seemed to be aware of the difficult situations of some queer staff members. One wrote, "I know of one gay teacher, but we only found out about this by accident. I think the teachers know (or some of them do) but students aren't supposed to know. We haven't told anyone."

The most commonly cited approach for queer staff represented a sort of middle ground: "They're not shouting it but people know. It's just not a topic of conversation." Several staff members stated that, on the whole, queer staff are simply regarded as "just part of the team." Being queer is just one facet of their identities. A few principals went further, stressing the irrelevance of gender and sexuality to teaching or counselling. One said, "We don't employ people because they have a husband and kids. We hire whoever's the best person for the job." Another told me, "I don't know. I don't ask. I mean, I don't go investigating if they're straight or if they're gay. It doesn't matter as long as they do their job." But, while non-discriminatory employment practices are an important element of ensuring opportunities for capable queer staff, ignoring the specific challenges that queer staff members face in doing their jobs may, in some cases, constitute a lack of adequate support.

While nearly two-thirds of students were aware of "out" students, far fewer were aware of any queer couples at their schools. Nevertheless, a large number of students seemed aware of the heterosexism inherent to some schools' rules concerning school balls. Some respondents wrote about policies that forbid a student from taking a person of the same sex to a school formal. Others cited policies intended to limit the number of students bringing along friends from other schools. According to these policies, any student wishing to invite a friend of the same sex to a school ball would be required to sign a statement confirming that he or she was queer and

that the friend in question was his or her romantic partner. One student wrote, "My best friend wasn't allowed to take his boyfriend to the ball so the boyfriend went with another girl. I wasn't allowed to go to my old school ball with one of my really good friends because I was a girl, never mind that I used to go to the school and we actually were just friends." Another student described a friend who "wanted to go to the ball with his boyfriend, but the counsellor pleaded with him not to." A few female students were suspicious of the form-signing policy limiting outside attendees, noting that, while they could not bring female friends from other schools, they could bring male friends from other schools. And, while some schools allow students to come to school balls as individuals or in groups rather than as couples, this is not the case everywhere. One student from an all-female school wrote, "You can't go to the formal on your own either, you have to take a guy." Even a teacher from a school that does permit students to attend formals in any configuration they desire confirmed that "the assumption is the boy-girl relationship."

Some school staff were unsure of what rules were in place around school formals. One counsellor said, "Girls aren't allowed to take other girls to the formals. Or, at least, that was the case a few years ago. It might not be true now. Or there might be a form they have to sign." Others stated that the situation had simply never come up. A staff member at an all-male school said, "It's never happened. I can't imagine anyone being brave enough to do that. I'm not sure what would happen. I think the administration would be hard pressed to say no." Another principal thought such a situation would provide an interesting litmus test for the school community: "I don't know how we'd respond to [two same-sex students] wanting to attend a formal as a couple. It would be a challenge, it would be interesting to see how far along we are on where we stand." Of the staff I spoke with, most agreed that any policy that prevented a same-sex couple from attending a school formal or that required queer students to out themselves was unfair and inappropriate. One counsellor said that, even when policies appeared not to discriminate against queer students, they often put them in an awkward position: "There was a rule of 'genuine partners only.' And same-sex partners were given the same treatment as straight partners, in that they could go if they were 'genuine partners.' But they knew that, in reality, nobody was going to declare themselves that way." There were, however, a large number of staff members who were able to state with confidence that their schools did not endorse such policies. One counsellor said, "We always have girls who go to the formal together and it's none of our business if they're friends or couples. It's always been that way. It's a bit of a non-issue." It should be noted, however, that even at schools that permit same-sex couples to attend balls together, most students felt that male students would be unlikely to do so. One male student wrote that, while it was within school rules, "it would just be too uncomfortable. I took one of my female friends."

Some students and staff members offered other observations on the treatment of queer couples at school. Student respondents stated that staff members generally made no comments about queer student relationships and treated queer couples the same as they would straight couples. One principal's remarks reflect this common

standard for all student couples: "I would frown on them going around the school holding hands or kissing, the same as I would with heterosexual couples." Another principal seemed more positively disposed to young couples in general and told the story of two same-sex boarders who developed a relationship: "Our boarding staff is maybe a little conservative, so this was a bit of a shock for some of them. But I thought, 'Look, they're both of age to consent, and it's just young love. We all remember that.'" In contrast, one all-male school has honoured the request of a parent in keeping two boys apart. A staff member explained that "one of their parents has told the school not to let them hang out together. And their teacher has told me that he suspects it's because they might be gay." Students reported varied peer response to queer couples, but stated that it was generally relatively subdued, as compared to general bullying of queer students. One male student wrote, "I had a boyfriend at school and we just got nasty rumours made up about us." Another student said that her peers were "pretty good about it (sort of a stunned reaction rather than an unkind reaction)." A third student wrote of a female couple, "I've even heard people say that they think it is cute to see them together." It is clear from these comments that queer relationships enjoy a certain degree of acceptance at some Otago high schools, while they remain invisible at others.

Aside from some high schools' rules regarding formals, most students and staff were satisfied that their schools' written guidelines and policies are non-discriminatory and inclusive of queer students and families. In addition, while not all school forms are sensitive to diverse family structures, many schools make an effort to present them in a way that includes not only queer families, but also blended and extended families and solo or separated parents. While one counsellor admitted that his school's "rather enlightened" sounding policies are "not really a focus" and are often subordinated to a less "enlightened" reality, having non-discriminatory policies in place is a good beginning.

There is, however, a particular demographic of students for whom most high schools did not have established policies: trans youth. As stated earlier, the majority of staff members were not aware of the presence of any gender diverse students at their schools. In some cases, this may result from trans students' perception that it would not be safe to be open about it in their school environments. The authors of *Safety in Our Schools*, citing an American study, stated that "transgender students face severe discrimination and harassment in schools, with 89.5 percent reporting that they felt unsafe at school" (p. 26). *To Be Who I Am – Kia noho au ki tōku anō ao*, the Human Rights Commission's 2007 report on transgender New Zealanders, similarly identified high school as an especially difficult time for trans students. Citing first-hand accounts of the harassment of young trans kiwis, the report stated that "many [trans youth] are vulnerable when moving from intermediate to secondary school, particularly with the onset of puberty" (p. 32). In keeping with these findings, student respondents to the survey reported a variety of negative reactions to non-gender-normative behaviour or dress among Otago high school students. At some schools, students wrote, responses include laughter, gossiping, verbal or physical bullying, and

the assumption that the student is gay. Students from a few of Dunedin's co-ed high schools, however, testified to a somewhat greater degree of acceptance for gender diversity. Several respondents recounted stories of former students who "went through school in full drag and no one minded." Another wrote that students are "maybe a little surprised or shocked at first but they accept it and are supportive." Some respondents were careful to stress, though, that peer reactions depend largely on how seriously the student identifies with their non-normative dress or behaviour. One student cautioned that "cross dressing as a joke is laughed at. However, it might be harder for someone serious." Given the emotionally and physically vulnerable position of gender diverse students, neither laughter (even when it is intended without malice) nor bullying is conducive to a safe learning environment.

As a basic measure to discourage harassment of gender diverse students, *Safety in Our Schools* recommends that schools "ensure that the school anti-discrimination and anti-harassment policies encompass intersex and transgender/questioning students – and enforce these policies meaningfully" (p. 26). While most Otago high schools endeavour to craft comprehensive anti-harassment or anti-bullying policies, including, in some cases, sexuality-based bullying and sexual harassment, very few of these mention gender or gender diversity based bullying. This is an oversight that may affect very few students, but it has the potential to affect those students quite strongly.

Safety in Our Schools and *To Be Who I Am* offer suggestions about a variety of other issues that might impact gender diverse students. Some concern bureaucratic matters, such as altering names and pronouns on school records as a student requests. Others tackle more day-to-day issues. For example, schools should establish a safe and accessible toilet option for trans students who might feel uncomfortable or unsafe using the male or female designated toilets. Many schools have single-stall unisex toilets for teachers, guests, disabled students, or general use. Staff members were quick to acknowledge the difficult time a trans student would have in accessing something as simple as a toilet facility. One counsellor gave the assurance that, "if it came up, though, something would be designated for the students, because that's what would fit into the NAG5 guidelines for emotional safety." Some schools similarly had private cubicles in the changing rooms, but no separate, neutral changing facilities. A number of counsellors noted an increasing feeling of unease among all students in both male and female changing rooms, citing students changing in toilet stalls, showering in boxer shorts, or not showering at all. Some put it down to a "gay phobia" of being seen naked or seeing another student naked, but most felt that students are simply self-conscious about their developing bodies. For gender diverse students using either changing room, this level of physical unease may be even more extreme, and may be exacerbated by harassment from other students. Staff members agreed that such a situation would be uncomfortable and potentially dangerous for trans students.

Safety in Our Schools also recommends that schools permit students to participate in sports teams and other gender-segregated activities in accordance with their gender identities. When this suggestion was discussed with the staff of several co-ed high schools, most reiterated that the situation hadn't yet arisen, but felt fairly sure that the school would accommodate a trans student appropriately. A number of students also voiced confidence that at least some teachers would be amenable to the recommendation that they use the name and pronouns by which a trans student self-identifies, though a few counsellors expressed doubts as to how well that would go. In addition, as single-sex high schools account for nine of Otago's 27 high schools (7 out of 12 in Dunedin), a significant portion of Otago's gender diverse youth potentially attend not simply gender-segregated activities but gender-segregated institutions inconsistent with their gender identities. On top of the inherent discomfort in self-identifying as male while attending an all girls' school (or vice-versa), the authors of *To Be Who I Am* also note that harassment of students with non-normative gender identities is often worse in single-sex environments (p. 31).

A related issue is that of school uniforms. *Safety in Our Schools* suggests that schools permit students to wear uniforms and clothing in keeping with their gender identities. At some Otago schools, uniform rules are such that this would not be an issue. One counsellor explained that "the uniforms aren't gender-specific. One of the gay girls asked me if she could wear the trousers, and I said yes, and then went and checked just to be sure. And the answer was, 'She can wear trousers if she wants to wear trousers.'" The counsellor did not

In general, Otago high schools lacked policies or guidelines around the majority of issues that impact gender diverse students

state whether kilts may similarly be worn by all students. Some schools' policies state that girls may wear trousers, but boys may not wear kilts. Other schools, including many single-sex schools, prescribe gender-specific uniforms with no flexibility. At the single-sex schools, most staff felt that a student would not be permitted to wear anything apart from the school uniform, as no alternative uniform existed. The staff of co-ed schools were less sure of what their schools would permit, as none have written policies on the topic.

In general, Otago high schools lacked policies or guidelines around the majority of issues that impact gender diverse students. This absence of clear policies or pathways for trans youth usually correlated to the perceived absence of trans youth in schools. Staff members often expressed that it was a situation the school would tackle if it came up. That schools are not taking a proactive approach is understandable. As *To Be Who I Am* explains, "Schools, like parents, currently lack adequate information about the issues faced by trans children and young people and the most appropriate ways to respond" (p. 32). This lack of resources and information,

combined with a perception that few, if any, students stand to benefit from the expense of time and energy to develop policies and support, results in a low priority ranking for this set of issues. But just as there are queer youth who fly under the radar, there are trans youth who pass through high school unnoticed. Even if they don't make themselves known to staff, gender diverse students benefit from the existence of policies that include and affirm them, rather than contributing to an atmosphere that invisibilises them. Furthermore, it is the school's responsibility to establish supportive policies in advance, rather than placing the burden on an already vulnerable young person to come forward and request them, or worse, waiting for an incident to occur that highlights the need.

Part of providing a supportive school environment is making resources available and accessible for queer and questioning youth. This includes fiction and non-fiction library books and materials by and about queer people. When asked whether the school library contained books on issues relating to queer students, most student respondents suspected that there were such books, though "they haven't been brought to students' attention" or filed together in a section. From a practical standpoint, the discreet inclusion of these books probably works best, as staff and students agreed that many students would not want to be seen browsing through queer books. Several students stated that they would avoid checking out or reading queer-related materials in the school library altogether. Other students felt more comfortable perusing queer literature at school and were pleased at its inclusion in the library. At some schools, such students would find "nothing special." As one principal suggested, "There's the encyclopaedia. I suppose that if they wanted to go and look up Sappho in the World Book, they could read an article about her." But in other school libraries, the inclusion of queer-related books is deliberate. One counsellor said, "The librarian and I work together to pick books and resources for various social issues. I look at them before she orders them, or I read them when they come in, so that I can point students to certain books or even get them out for the students." In general, most students and staff were confident that queer students would find at least a few books on queer topics, though it was not clear that students would be likely to find books on gender diversity or on queer-related topics from culturally diverse perspectives. Some high schools also subscribe to the Otago Daily Times, a regional queer newspaper. In some instances, the OGT is placed on library shelves while, in others, it stays in the counsellor's office. One counsellor explained, "I'm not quite game enough to stick it in our library. Sometimes kids can be quite silly with their homophobia, defacing things and so on. It's not helpful."

In addition to stocking copies of the OGT, all Dunedin school counsellors also receive pamphlets from PFLAG South on issues including what it means to be gay and coming out to parents. While counsellors are grateful to have something to give questioning youth, unfortunately, many of the PFLAG pamphlets contain outdated information and contact details and are not necessarily directed at a youth audience. Some counsellors supplement these pamphlets with other resources, including information from health and community

groups and queer magazines from the university. One counsellor commented on the benefits of making these materials openly accessible: "The girls who come into the room might joke about them at first, but then they look through the resources seriously and get the information." Counsellors also display posters and fliers in their waiting areas and offices promoting PFLAG South's Same/Difference youth group for queer high school students. PFLAG's youth coordinator sends email notices and hard copies of posters to counsellors updating them on events for the month, and many counsellors are happy to hang up posters and refer students to the group. In addition, nearly every counsellor's office or waiting area displayed posters from UniQ or other organisations promoting acceptance and inclusion of queer youth. At some schools, counsellors said that these posters were displayed around the school. At other schools, their placement was confined to the counsellor's office, because "if we put them around the school, there would be kids defacing them and that would create an atmosphere of harm for others." The issue of getting these kinds of information and resources out to students is a problem for many Otago high schools. Counsellors stated that they didn't want to "gatekeep" resources, but at the same time, they were concerned that queer and questioning students have a safe environment in which to explore them. While one teacher suggested that "there needs to be more blatant information sitting out somewhere so that kids don't have to ask. They can just pick something up and walk off with it," many students remarked that it was more important just to make students aware of where to access information, whether that be from the school counsellor, the "itinerant sexual health guy who is at school Monday lunchtimes or something like that," a community group, or a particular internet website. Student respondents valued the balance between accessibility and discretion and made practical suggestions for maintaining that balance. For example, one student recommended that posters "have the contact number in big letters, so that way you can sort of like be standing over here and you can see the poster, and you're not going up and putting the number into your cell phone like that."

Safety in Our Schools contains a brief section on diversity groups. "Diversity groups, also known as pride groups or gay/straight alliances, are student-organised school groups that aim to create a safe, welcoming and accepting school environment for all youth – regardless of sexual or gender identity." (p. 30). At present, the Same/Difference youth group, facilitated by university-aged volunteers and overseen by PFLAG South, is the only queer diversity group operating in Otago. The group is comprised of a total of 20-25 students, of which a shifting group of 8-12 youth turn up for movies, game nights, coffee-shop chats, and other social outings twice a month. Having only begun less than two years ago, Same/Difference limits its scope to providing a safe and confidential social venue for queer students and their friends, and does not operate as a support group or as a provider of queer health information.

Students were asked what they thought about the idea of having queer diversity groups at their schools. Over half of respondents, including many queer identified students, felt that it would be a poor

idea. Most stated that, even if it was open to queer and straight students alike, "joining such a group would probably alienate them from the rest of the student body." Others speculated that there would be too few participants to make it worthwhile or that "it would just be fuel for bullying and discrimination." Interestingly, several other students wrote that, while a queer diversity group would not be a danger at their school, it would be unnecessary and probably poorly attended as a result. As one transfer student put it, "--- wouldn't have supported it and it wouldn't have been allowed, and the kids at --- didn't need one. Everyone gets along pretty well." At one end of the spectrum, queer students are at risk and a diversity group might only increase that risk, while at the other end of the spectrum, queer students are accepted and a diversity group would be superfluous.

A large number of school staff echoed the variety of concerns expressed by these students. One counsellor said decisively, "I can't imagine that here. It would probably be dangerous for the students involved." Another, a counsellor at an all-male school, said that the school "would worry about what it might bring onto the group itself. The isolation." One principal speculated, "I think kids would be reluctant to come forward in an open forum. Students whose sexualities are just developing might feel threatened." Other staff admitted other factors that might influence their schools' responses to the idea. One counsellor said, "One of the things that's particular to this school is its links with Christianity. So it also depends on where people are on that continuum as to how they respond." Another staff member thought that such a group would face resistance from the administration: "[They] would want to reflect the community and keep the focus on learning. There's also this sort of feeling that they probably don't know who they are yet and we wouldn't want to force them into something that's not really what they will grow up to be later. I also think --- might not want us to be known as the school that has that kind of group." One principal similarly noted that, if a queer diversity group existed, the school would "monitor it for safety, and to prevent headlines coming out that might sabotage enrolment." Oddly enough, another principal worried that the group might become too popular: "It could become just another thing that people join as an extracurricular activity, like SADD or Amnesty International."

Some staff members, however, thought that it would be possible to set-up a queer diversity group, if students wanted one. Most stressed that the group would have to be handled carefully, to ensure that students would be safe and their meetings confidential, but that it was not out of the question. One counsellor said that the idea had never come up, but "if some guys wanted to get a room for meetings, we'd see to it in a fair, reasonable way. We'd give them support." Another principal was enthusiastic about the idea: "We don't have one, but we would absolutely support the establishment of a group if the students asked to form one." One queer-identified teacher was confident that, while peer acceptance might be more problematic, students would have no trouble with the administration: "I'm absolutely sure that it would be supported. It wouldn't be a problem. It would be a new concept, but it would be supported by the management."

A few counsellors had made inquiries of queer students in the past about starting groups. In fact, one school counsellor held a small support group for queer students for a while, but the group dissolved when the counsellor left the school. Another counsellor from a rural-Otago school said, "We had a gay guy here a few years ago, and we just laughed and laughed about the possibility of starting a Gay Straight Alliance at the youth club, because he reckoned he'd be the only one who'd turn up." Another counsellor said, "We would be supportive of having a group, but I wouldn't want to initiate it without a group of students in mind. I did ask one student about it, but he felt that he was still testing the waters here and preferred to seek outside support." The majority of counsellors stated that, if the school were to establish a queer diversity group, the idea and the energy for the group would have to come from the students.

One student respondent had made an effort to set up a queer diversity group at her school and was frustrated by the response she and her friends received. "We tried to set up a GSA. The head teacher said we could maybe do it, but it would be a secret, by invitation only and only in our year level. (In other words, it would die out next year because we'd leave the school and no one in other years would know about it.) The head teacher said she'd get back to us. She never did [...] We've given up." Though no other students reported trying to set up groups at their schools, a number of students agreed that the concept had potential. One student wrote that, at present, "There's no support. There's no information. There's nowhere where you can be open about things. There's no way to put pressure on the school to change unfair rules. There's no way to do anything." Within such an environment, a small organised community of queer and queer-friendly students can be a valuable source of support and fellowship, affirming queer students and helping to change peer attitudes as a group. Another student thought that, over time, the existence of a queer diversity group would help queer students to feel safer about coming out and might reduce bullying of queer students. This is in keeping with the aforementioned benefits of students being aware of a queer "presence" in high schools. In addition, queer diversity groups enjoy what *Safety in Our Schools* describes as "the feeling of safety, knowing that the school supports this group" (p. 30). Overall, students and staff generally recognised the potential benefits of queer diversity groups but were realistic about their drawbacks and about the individual safety concerns of each school.

Recommendations: General School Environment

Part of employing a diverse staff is being ready to support them. For queer staff members, that support from the administration and from their colleagues can make all the difference. While it is true that employees' sexual or gender orientations don't affect their ability to do their jobs, the prejudice they encounter can. It is recommended that schools establish strategies of support for all staff, including queer staff, for whom the attitudes of students, parents, and other staff members might constitute an extra challenge to do their jobs.

It is also important to advocate the abolition of any remaining school policies, including those pertaining to school balls, that discriminate against queer students or couples. Queer students, like straight students, should have the right to attend school formals with the partner of their choosing, or with a friend, or alone, without having to make any declaration as to their sexual orientation. Any form that requires students to out themselves compromises their safety and comfort and sets an unfair double standard. Schools should also make an effort in other policy areas to avoid making assumptions about students' sexual orientation or that of their families. This includes producing forms that are sensitive to diverse family structures.

It is also imperative that schools are inclusive of gender diverse students, regardless of whether there are any openly gender diverse students currently enrolled. This must begin with the explicit inclusion of transphobic bullying in all schools' anti-harassment policies, and these policies must be enforced. It is further recommended that schools establish careful, yet flexible, policies around other issues that impact trans students, now, rather than waiting for a trans student to come along. Policy-makers could be guided by *To Be Who I Am* and *Safety in Our Schools* in considering the unique challenges gender diverse students face at school. These include finding safe and accessible toilet and changing room options, participating in gender-segregated activities, wearing a uniform that coincides with the student's gender identity, being addressed by the appropriate name and pronouns, and navigating the bureaucratic structures around gender and names on school records and files. In addition, while it is inevitable that some trans students will attend single-sex high schools not in keeping with their gender identities, school staff are urged to actively discourage parents from enrolling a questioning or gender diverse student in a single-sex institution in an effort to "straighten them out," as such efforts are often traumatic for students.

Queer youth should have access to books and materials that reflect their feelings and experiences and model a range of queer identities and issues. Most staff members were excited by the idea of expanding the resources available in the school library to include more fiction and non-fiction aimed at queer students. In stocking libraries with queer reading material for students, staff may be guided by Rainbow Youth's list of queer resources for New Zealand secondary schools at www.rainbowyouth.org.nz/resources/library.

The Dunedin Public Library also publishes a list of queer books in its holdings. Schools might consider ordering books from this list or perhaps placing copies of this list in the school library for students who would prefer to access queer books elsewhere. Counsellors might also consider checking out books for students who would rather not be seen checking out or reading a queer-related book. In addition, when purchasing new books on queer topic matter for the library, it is advised that staff choose editions with plain, discreet covers, whenever possible.

Counsellors should also maintain a collection of queer-related information and resources. This may include the PFLAG South pamphlets, but it is also recommended that counsellors take advantage of the wealth of publications put out by queer and queer-friendly groups whose main audience is youth. This includes queer sexual health information from organisations such as Family Planning and the New Zealand AIDS Foundation, as well as more general information for queer youth from groups such as OUTTHERE! There are also several phone helplines and a variety of websites from both New Zealand and overseas which help to connect queer students to information, support, and social opportunities, in spite of their relative remoteness geographically. Counsellors should also stay up to date on queer and queer-friendly community organisations and queer-friendly counsellors and health services. Finally, counsellors should be able to provide links to appropriate counselling and health services for trans students, including trans students who are considering medically transitioning through surgery or hormones.

School staff should continue to use their own discretion in deciding which school environments are safe to display information and resources for queer students. As much as possible, counsellors should make information freely accessible to all students, including those who would be reluctant to visit the counsellor. In some cases, however, it may be best for counsellors to keep all materials in their offices or just outside in the waiting areas. Staff members are encouraged to be creative in considering how to get information to students. One teacher suggested, "It would be simple, not just at this school, but generally, to have a notice in the newsletter or the daily notices to advertise the youth group." Schools could also utilise their websites or student email systems to place links to information or support sites for queer youth, as websites are harder to deface than posters or pamphlets.

The issue of queer diversity groups is one that varies widely in its feasibility. As one counsellor said, "The support group is a hard one. You have to hope you don't get kids going along to be a nuisance or to have a go [...] But there's this fear of creating something that doesn't exist and it causing a lot of fear and stress. But we probably create more fear and stress by doing nothing." In schools where it would not be possible or beneficial for students to meet openly as an organised group, counsellors might consider hosting small, facilitated discussions with interested students in a discreet, private setting. If, however, a group of students does approach the school administration with the request to start a queer diversity group, staff

are encouraged to make every possible effort to foster the group's creation and development to the furthest extent that it is practicable. This may be another instance in which the existence of an external community queer support position would be advantageous to schools. Several staff members suggested that helping to set up or even helping students to run a diversity group might be a potential role for a Safety in Schools coordinator. One counsellor said, "We have people coming into the school for lots of other reasons. It would be an opportunity for normalising, and it would be a sort of 'out there' thing to do. And then we wouldn't have to find someone to run it. We would already have someone trained in listening to these kinds of concerns." The idea of having external support from a trained queer youth worker seemed to put many staff members at ease when considering the possibility of setting up some form of queer diversity group at school.

In the meantime, it is recommended that Dunedin counsellors and staff continue to refer students to the PFLAG Same/Difference youth group for social interaction with queer youth from across Dunedin. Many counsellors expressed their enthusiasm for the group and were pleased that such an opportunity exists. One counsellor said, "I would like students to take up the PFLAG group opportunity. I think it's good. It's only come up with one girl. But she didn't want to go to a group setting. It's a hard enough issue to wrap your own head around, let alone with a group. But maybe further down the journey, a group might be a good thing. It has to be the right time." For some students, an individual approach may be more in order, and for others, perhaps a support group, rather than a social group, would be more helpful. At present, this is beyond the scope of Same/Difference, but hopefully, in the future, there will be a greater variety of groups available to queer students, not only in Dunedin, but elsewhere in Otago.

Conclusion

In general, Otago's secondary schools have a great many strengths to draw from on the way to becoming safe, welcoming, and affirming environments for all students, including queer and gender diverse young people. Chief among these are the excellent systems of support many schools have in place for the general student body, and the large number of staff and students who are excited about the idea of making Otago high schools places of acceptance for every kind of diversity. It is hoped that this report has increased readers' awareness of the challenges queer students face in their high schools and that staff members and community groups will endeavour to put into action some of the recommendations offered. Readers are encouraged to peruse some of the websites and resources suggested within this report for more ideas. It is hoped that Otago high schools make the development of safe and queer-inclusive educational environments a priority in the coming years, not only for the sake of queer students, but for all students. As one straight-identified student summed up, "I think that [a fully inclusive school environment] will make the students feel more comfortable and confident about themselves and also more accepting of different kinds of people. Accepting everyone for who they are is a very important skill that leads into all aspects of our lives - especially after we leave school."

Appendix A – Otago’s Secondary Schools

Dunedin Secondary Schools	Total Enrolment	Years	Boarders	Co-ed/Single-Sex	Decile	Religious Affiliation
Bayfield High School	733	9-15	No	Co-ed	8	none
Columba College	574*	1-15	Yes	Secondary: Girls	10	Presbyterian
John McGlashan College	511	7-15	Yes	Boys	10	Presbyterian
Kaikorai Valley College	872	7-15	No	Co-ed	5	none
Kavanagh College	896	7-15	No	Co-ed	8	Catholic
Kings High School	689	9-15	Yes	Boys	6	none
Logan Park High School	567	9-15	No	Co-ed	7	none
Otago Boys High School	820	9-15	Yes	Boys	9	none
Otago Girls High School	799	9-15	No	Girls	9	none
Queens High School	546	9-15	No	Girls	5	none
St. Hilda's Collegiate	443	7-15	Yes	Girls	10	Anglican
Taieri College	1046	7-15	No	Co-ed	6	none

Greater Otago Secondary Schools	Total Enrolment	Years	Boarders	Co-ed/Single-Sex	Decile	Religious Affiliation
Blue Mountain College (Tapanui)	246	7-15	No	Co-ed	7	none
Cromwell College (Cromwell)	368	7-15	Yes	Co-ed	8	none
Dunstan High School (Alexandra)	530	9-15	Yes	Co-ed	9	none
East Otago High School (Palmerston)	173	7-15	No	Co-ed	5	none
Lawrence Area School (Lawrence)	134*	1-15	No	Co-ed	6	none
Maniototo Area School (Ranfurly)	180*	1-15	No	Co-ed	7	none
Mount Aspiring College (Wanaka)	608	7-15	Yes	Co-ed	10	none
Roxburgh Area School (Roxburgh)	162*	1-15	No	Co-ed	4	None
South Otago High School (Balclutha)	546	9-15	No	Co-ed	6	None
St. Kevin's College (Oamaru)	431	9-15	Yes	Co-ed	7	Catholic
The Catlins Area School (Owaka)	163*	1-15	No	Co-ed	6	None
Tokomairiro High School (Milton)	281	7-15	No	Co-ed	5	None
Waitaki Boys' High School (Oamaru)	544	9-15	Yes	Boys	6	None
Waitaki Girls' High School (Oamaru)	463	9-15	Yes	Girls	6	None
Wakatipu High School (Queenstown)	824	7-15	No	Co-ed	10	None

*These total enrolments include primary school students.

All figures come from the Ministry of Education's "Te Kete Ipurangi The Online Learning Centre" school information search page (www.tki.org.nz/e/schools). They were retrieved 13 October, 2009.

Appendix B – The Coastal Otago Safer Schools Safer Communities Charter

Coastal Otago is renowned for its unique character, great natural beauty, historical tradition, friendliness of its citizens and the excellence of its educational facilities. The region acknowledges that the well being and safety of all people within our region is of paramount importance. In order to ensure the children and young people of the region enjoy optimum, safe education, the following charter has been developed.

- We endeavour to promote a safe and secure environment by encouraging a collective responsibility for our own and other's safety and well-being.
- We encourage acceptance of all people, inclusive of ethnicity, religion, socio-economic background, gender, sexual orientation, appearance and abilities.
- We have in place a programme of information and education in relation to what is acceptable and not acceptable behaviour and the promotion of non-violent conflict resolution.
- We are committed to the principle that any type of teasing, bullying, harassment or threatening behaviour is not acceptable.
- We are committed to identifying, challenging and taking a stand against behaviour that is inappropriate under this charter.
- We have clear and regularly reviewed processes for people to follow if they are teased, bullied, harassed or threatened, and we deal with complaints promptly.

This charter was signed by all of the Dunedin High Schools and COSSSC Committee member organisations. An electronic copy of the charter may be found on the Dunedin City Council website: http://www.dunedin.govt.nz/services/roading/safety-campaigns/coastal_otago_safer_schools_safer_communities



MINISTRY OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Te Manatū Whakahiato Ora

SELECTED GLBTI* DEFINITIONS

These definitions are a guide only. Please note that the meanings of terms are often contested and tend to change over time. The terms are often used or interpreted differently depending on the individual or context.

Sex and Gender Related Definitions

Sex	Sex is the physical aspect of identity, classified as male or female or intersex on the basis of biological make up, such as external genitals, reproductive organs, hormones and/or chromosomes.
Gender	Gender is commonly understood as a social aspect of identity, generally classified as male or female. It is a cultural construction of what it means to be a man or a woman, including roles, expectations and behaviour.
Gender identity	Gender identity is an aspect of identity that can be understood as the psychological sex. It is an individual's internal sense of being male or female or something other or in between. It may or may not correspond to a person's physical sex. A person's sexual orientation cannot be assumed on the basis of their gender identity.
Gender expression	Gender expression refers to how an individual expresses themselves by way of external characteristics and behaviours (such as clothing and body language) that are socially defined as being either masculine or feminine.
Transgender	The term transgender is used by different groups in different ways. It is often used as a catch-all umbrella term for a variety of people who feel that the sex they were assigned at birth is a false or incomplete description of themselves. Transgendered people may or may not use some form of medical intervention to better align their physical sex with their gender identity, and may or may not have any interest in such a procedure. Gender reassignment services are some times called gender realignment services by trans people. They include but are not limited to hormone treatment and surgeries, such as mastectomy and genital reconstruction. The term transgender can include a number of sub-categories, including, among others, transsexuals, cross-dressers, transvestites, genderqueer and consciously androgynous people. The adjective "trans" is increasingly preferred as a general term, for example "trans person". If a gender term is also used, this refers to the person's gender identity, eg a "trans man" was born in a body defined as female but identifies as male.

GLBTI is used here to refer to a group of identities including gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, takatāpui, intersex, fa'afafine, queer and questioning people, and to others who do not fit into heterosexual or gender norms. Another common abbreviation is LGBT.

Transsexual	<p>Transsexualism is usually understood as the enduring, pervasive, compelling desire to live in the sex opposite to the one a person was born in.</p> <p>A common way of describing this is the image of a transsexual as a woman trapped in a man's body or vice versa.</p> <p>“FtM” is sometimes used for a trans man / ‘female to male’, ie a person who was born in a female body/sex but has a male gender identity. An equivalent Māori term is tangata ira tane. “MtF” is sometimes used for a trans woman / ‘male to female’. Equivalent Māori terms are whakawahine, hinehi, hinehua. Many people prefer the terms male or female, in line with their gender identity.</p> <p>The process transsexual people go through to live in their gender identity is called transitioning.</p> <p>Pre-operative transsexuals have not had surgery to align their physical sex with their gender of identity. Post-operative transsexuals have had gender reassignment/ alignment surgery. Post operative transsexuals can have their birth records altered by Births Deaths and Marriages to record their changed sex and have passports issued accordingly.</p> <p>Some transsexuals may not be interested in, or able to have surgery, but may take other steps, such as using hormones. They may identify as ‘non-operative’.</p>
Fa’afafine	<p>Fa’afafine is a Samoan term that literally means “like a woman”. Fa’afafine is often used to refer to people born male who express feminine gender identities in a range of ways, but is sometimes used more broadly refer to all people who do not identify with or live according to common understandings of their birth gender. Sometimes the term ‘third sex’ is used.</p> <p>Similar Pasifika terms include Fakaleiti (Tongan), Akava’ine (Cook Islands Māori), Fiafine (Niuean) and Vaka sa lewa lewa (Fijian).</p>
Genderqueer	<p>Genderqueer is a term some people use to describe themselves who do not conform to or agree with traditional gender norms and who express a gender identity that is neither completely male nor female. Some may identify as gender neutral or androgynous.</p>
Intersex	<p>Intersex people are born with any of a number of physical variations that means they do not fit expectations of either male or female physical sex (eg they have genitals that are atypical, XXY chromosomes, etc). Intersex anatomy is not always visible at birth, and may become apparent at puberty, later or not at all. Surgery is performed on some intersex infants and children to physically align them with the sex they are assigned. This practice is criticised, particularly by intersex people. A child’s sex assignment may not match the gender identity the person develops as they grow up. This can mean that some intersex people can face gender identity issues similar to a transgender person.</p>
Disorders of Sex Development (DSD) Variations of Sex Development (VSD)	<p>Disorders of sex development (DSD) is a term that has recently appeared in some medical contexts in place of ‘intersex’.</p> <p>There is opposition to use of the term DSD from some intersex people who disagree with its medicalisation, and in particular, the reference to ‘disorders’.</p> <p>Variations of Sex Development (VSD) is an alternative to DSD proposed by human sexuality expert Professor Milton Diamond.</p>

Sexual Orientation Related Definitions

Sexual orientation	<p>Sexual orientation denotes the direction of a person’s sexuality relative to their own sex. It is usually classified according to the sex or gender of the people an individual finds sexually attractive. This can relate to a psychological component (the direction of sexual/romantic desire), a behavioural component (the sex of sexual/romantic partner/s) and/or an individual's social identity (group membership/identification).</p> <p>Sexual orientation is usually categorised as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • homosexual (directed at the same sex) • heterosexual (directed at the opposite sex) • bisexual (directed at both sexes, sometimes abbreviated to ‘bi’). <p>Some people always identify with one sexual orientation, whereas others may change their primary orientation and the meaning they give it in a quite fluid way at times or throughout their life course.</p>
Gay	Gay can refer to homosexual/same-sex attracted women and men, but is more often used in relation to males.
Lesbian	Lesbian is used exclusively in relation to homosexual/same-sex attracted women.
MSM	The abbreviation of “men who have sex with men”, MSM is used to include both gay and bisexual men and men who identify as heterosexual or otherwise but who at least occasionally engage in sexual activities with other men. Mostly used in the context of sexual health.
Asexuality	Asexuality is an absence of sexual attraction or desire. It is sometimes described as a fourth type of sexual orientation, ie one that is not directed at anyone. Others, however, do not define it as an orientation, stating that asexual people can form emotional romantic attachments, which can be heterosexual, homosexual or bisexual in orientation.

Terms referring to both gender identity and sexual orientation

Coming out	<p>Coming out (of the closet) or being out refers to disclosing one's same-sex sexual attraction or one’s non-conforming gender identity. Coming out is usually a complex and dynamic process, often said to begin with coming out to oneself, ie acknowledging one’s identity, usually following a period of questioning. People must often continue to make the choice whether to out themselves in most new situations. Staying “in the closet”, and allowing or even fostering other people’s assumptions of heterosexuality or gender identity, is often an attempt to avoid homophobia or transphobia.</p> <p>A person can come out as trans before or while transitioning, and afterward to those unfamiliar with their previous sex.</p>
Takatāpui	The traditional meaning of takatāpui is ‘intimate companion of the same sex’. Many Māori people have adopted this term to describe themselves, instead of or in addition to terms such as lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer or trans. It refers to cultural <i>and</i> sexual/gender identity. Also spelt takataapui.
Queer	<p>Queer has been used as a derogatory term for gay and lesbian people in particular. Although some people continue to reject the term, it has recently been reclaimed and used in a positive sense by some to describe sexual orientation and/or gender identity or gender expression that does not conform to heteronormative expectations.</p> <p>It is sometimes used as an umbrella term for same-sex attraction and gender/sex diversity, including but not exclusive to people who are gay,</p>

	<p>lesbian, bisexual, transgender, takatāpui, fa'afafine, intersex or somewhere in between. This is more common among youth.</p> <p>It is sometimes used to express rejection of traditional gender categories and distinct sexual identities, such as lesbian, gay, bi, and straight (heterosexual).</p>
Sexual minority	Sexual minority is sometimes used to refer to groups that do not fit dominant heterosexual and/or gender identity norms. It is seldom used as a self-definition.

Other Useful Terms

Heteronormativity	<p>Heteronormativity refers to the reinforcement of certain beliefs by many social institutions. These beliefs include that people fall into two distinct and complementary categories, male and female; that sexual relations are normal only when between people of different sexes. This ties in with beliefs that each sex has certain natural roles in life. Thus, sex, gender identity and gender roles should always align to either all-male or all-female norms, and heterosexuality is the only normal sexual orientation.</p> <p>The norms this term describes or criticises might be overt, covert, or implied. Heteronormativity can be expressed in the (often subconscious) assumption that everyone is heterosexual, and the attitudes associated with that. For instance, when a woman refers to a partner, many people will ask, "What's his name?" assuming a heterosexual relationship. Nevertheless, these people may not have anything against same-sex relationships.</p> <p>Heteronormativity can stigmatise alternative concepts both sexuality and gender and make some types of self-expression more difficult.</p>
Heterosexism	<p>Heterosexism is a predisposition to heterosexuality as 'normal', which is biased against other forms of sexual orientation. This is not the same as homophobia, but is rather the discrimination against non-heterosexual people due to cultural bias. It often occurs through omission and/or distortion of non-heterosexual realities, eg in media.</p> <p>Heterosexism is structurally reinforced where institutions privilege heterosexual orientation. For example, where legislation, policies and/or practices link certain rights (eg marriage, partner entitlements) to being in an opposite-sex relationship.</p>
Homophobia	<p>Homophobia is the fear of, or aversion to homosexuality or those perceived to be homosexual, often resulting in discriminatory behaviour, i.e. treating people negatively on the basis of this perceived trait. Although individual, it can also support structural discrimination. In turn, stereotypes and negative messages about homosexuality cultivate homophobia.</p> <p>Homophobia can also be internalised, leading people to fear or hate their own feelings of same-sex attraction and damaging their self-esteem.</p>
Transphobia	Similar to homophobia, transphobia is the fear of, or aversion to trans people or those perceived to not fit accepted male-female gender norms. Transphobia can also be internalised.
Biphobia	Similar to homophobia, biphobia is the fear of, or aversion to bisexuality or those perceived to be bisexual. Biphobia can be expressed by gay men and lesbians as well as by straight people.

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