



FAMILY PLANNING  
ALLIANCE AUSTRALIA

# Scaling What Works: A National Approach to Comprehensive Relationships and Sexual Health Education Across Australia

Pre-budget submission  
2025–2028



# About FPAA

**Family Planning Alliance Australia (FPAA) is a long-standing alliance of the key sexual and reproductive health organisations from each of the Australian states and territories and as the peak body, is their national policy and advocacy voice.**

FPAA's eight Primary Members delivered 36,176 reproductive and sexual health services to 87,816 clients under the major groupings of contraceptive and non-contraceptive services in 2023. Services for each of these categories include a range of features including follow-ups, complications, prescriptions, and treatments.

**Vision – Optimal sexual and reproductive health and rights for everyone, everywhere.**

**Role – We are the national peak body driving action on sexual and reproductive health, rights and wellbeing.**

**We do this by:**

- Ensuring national investment in policy and system change
- Connecting knowledge for clinical excellence and health education and promotion.

Our work cuts across more than 20 national government strategies and policy frameworks in the portfolios of health, education, gendered violence, equity, e-safety, prevention of child sexual abuse and international development.

FPAA is the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) Australian country member, connecting us to a network of 150 Member Associations and Collaborative Partners with a presence in over 146 countries delivering sexual and reproductive health services and programs. Through this network we are connected to an international movement of organisations aligned to our vision and role to further sexual and reproductive health and rights for all.

**Contact FPAA CEO – Daile Kelleher**  
**[daile.kelleher@familyplanningallianceaustralia.org.au](mailto:daile.kelleher@familyplanningallianceaustralia.org.au)**  
**0409 625 189**

**Family Planning**  
Welfare Association of NT Inc.



**Family Planning Tasmania.**



**SHINE** SA



# Table of Contents

Executive Summary	1
What is CSE?	4
What is the evidence?	5
Relationship to national policy	5
How are we faring in Australia?	6
Appendices	7
References	9



# Executive Summary

With the current overlapping crises of DFSV, rising rates of sexually transmitted infections (STI's), young people's exposure to harm online, Australia needs to take strong action to educate, inform and raise awareness. We have a solution, a scalable and impactful program model ready to be delivered by a network of highly specialised service delivery organisations in each state and territory who are already delivering high quality, evidence based programmatic responses.

Family Planning Alliance Australia's (FPAA) eight primary members have delivered a range of CSE activities to schools, young people, carers, parents and teachers over their history of more than 50 years. FPAA's member organisations in each State and Territory each provide services and programs aligned to the shared goals and vision of improved sexual and reproductive health for all, and all vary according to their unique funding agreements, population health profiles and jurisdictional priorities. In South Australia, SHINE SA has been running the Focus Schools program since 2003 and now provide a mature and robust CSE program with a reach of close to 80% of all State schools with a secondary component. The Focus Schools program model has been assessed as fully compliant with the UNESCO Technical Guidance and has been recommended as the preferred model to scale up nationally.

Australia has a national school curriculum that supports the implementation of comprehensive relationships and sexual health education (hereafter called CSE). In the last 30 years, research evidence has continued to build and now provides strong support for comprehensive relationships and sexual health education across a range of topics and grade levels. This type of education goes further than just respectful relationship and consent education, delivering a range of important health and social outcomes, including STI and unintended pregnancy awareness and prevention.

While Australia has made some recent investments in 'consent education' and 'respectful relationships education' (RRE) these are simply components of CSE curriculum. They are not CSE and as yet the investment has not been committed to a programmatic approach, year on year.

Currently RRE has a focus on primary prevention including consent education and respectful relationships but fails to comprehensively include the provision of education on bodily autonomy, socialising online, diversity of Sex, gender, sexuality, contraception, STI's and BBV knowledge. These are often the topics where teachers and educators report a lack of knowledge and confidence.

There is a lack of coordinated funding between education and health. Young people report that their second most accessed source of information about sexual and reproductive health and relationships is from schools. (ARCSHS, 2021) yet funding streams from health do not support the provision of education in schools.

---

## Executive Summary continued

Schools can be unclear on their obligations to Child Safety Standards (CSS) or curriculum. Teachers state they lack confidence and knowledge in the delivery of CSE. Students removed from CRSE classes due to lack of parental consent or available funds with some schools passing on costs to parents for mandated curriculum requirements.

The provision of CSE is a critical component of a primary prevention response. A national coordinated approach and shared framework would allow for better national outcomes for all young people.

This is a proposal for the Department of Health and the Department of Education to jointly fund a National approach to comprehensive relationships and sexual health education. This is designed to complement and enhance existing government investment into Respectful Relationships Education and include sexual health as an essential component in this education. FPAA member associations are delivering these programs across Australia and our impact and reach is far greater than other organisations in this space.

With appropriate resourcing, FPAA is well-placed to develop a shared national framework and undertake a rapid and cost-effective scale-up of CSE by leveraging existing work already funded by state health departments.

**TOTAL investment from government is \$4.95million over 3 years**

This submission proposes coordinated implementation of CSE across Australia in a manner that is consistent with and informed heavily by the *UNESCO International technical guidance on sexuality education: An evidence-informed approach* (2019) (here after called the UNESCO Guidance).

This submission has been developed in consultation with the FPAA Comprehensive Relationships and Sexuality Education Working Group which consists of the lead educators and curriculum developers involved in schools-based education in all Australian states and territories.

### Develop a shared national framework

FPAA are seeking government investment to develop a shared national framework for Australia that includes the creation of the following foundational resources:

1. **National Standard for CSE Educator Competencies**
2. **National Standard for CSE Delivery Models**
3. **National List of Recommended Resources**
4. **National List of Recommended Providers.**

# Executive Summary continued

## Scale up existing programs

FPAA believes that resourcing to scale up and harmonise existing education activities in family planning organisations across Australia would provide an impactful and achievable programmatic and national response while leverage existing state-funded CSE activities. While most of the operational work would be driven by state and territory organisations, the FPAA would have a national support role. Scaling up could occur by:

- Developing a National FPAA CSE Support Team of expert educators
- Building state and territory-based CSE Delivery Teams (that meet the standards)
- Offer the program across all states and territories in school settings.

## Developing a National FPAA CSE Support Team

A national support team would assist in coordinating the initial implementation and development of the suite of national standards and support materials. Post implementation this team would have an ongoing role in driving continuous improvement and collaboration across states and territories, including for the purpose of:

- updating teaching resources
- developing, testing and refining new resources that respond to new and emerging issues
- participating in research and evaluation.

The work of the National CSE Support Team would be informed by a National CSE Technical Advisory Group and a National CSE Consumer Advisory Group.

Activity	Y1	Y2	Y3
National FPAA CSE Support Team of expert educators (includes salaries, professional development, equipment and CPI)	\$895,000	\$940,000	\$990,000
Resources	\$80,000	\$80,000	\$65,000
Web development and design	\$150,000	\$95,000	\$90,000
Knowledge translation and distribution of information and resources (conference and travel)	\$80,000	\$100,000	\$120,000
Evaluation	\$120,000	\$80,000	\$150,000
Co-design and expert consultation	\$100,000	\$90,000	\$90,000
Administrative overhead 16%	\$230,000	\$225,000	\$245,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$1.6million</b>	<b>\$1.6million</b>	<b>\$1.75 million</b>
<b>TOTAL \$4.95 million investment over 3 years</b>			

---

# What is CSE?

Around the world and across Australia there are a range of slightly differing terms used to refer to CSE. In Australia our most common terms are 'comprehensive relationships and sexual health education' or 'comprehensive relationships and sexuality education'. For the ease of reading and relating back to international guidance and research, this document uses the term 'comprehensive sexuality education' abbreviated to CSE, which is the term used in the *United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education: An evidence-informed approach* (2018).<sup>1</sup> This submission draws heavily from this guidance.

Internationally some terms also include: respectful relationships education, consent education, prevention education, relationships and sexuality education, family-life education, HIV education, life-skills education, healthy lifestyles and basic life or body safety education.<sup>1</sup>

Regardless of the terminology used, 'comprehensive' refers to the development of learners' knowledge, skills, and attitudes toward positive sexuality and good sexual and reproductive health. Core elements of CSE programs share certain similarities such as a firm grounding in human rights and a recognition of the broad concept of sexuality as a natural part of human development.<sup>1</sup>

The eight key concepts the UNESCO guidance recommends should be covered in CSE include:

1. Relationships
2. Values, Rights, Culture and Sexuality
3. Understanding Gender
4. Violence and Staying Safe
5. Skills for Health and Well-being
6. The Human Body and Development
7. Sexuality and Sexual Behaviour
8. Sexual and Reproductive Health.

In Australia, we also have a diverse and increasing number of programs and providers operating that deliver specific single-topics or sub-elements of CSE such as lessons in consent education, protective behaviours education, menstrual education and respectful relationships education. These topic-specific programs are most commonly delivered by a 'guest presenter' or as a one-off session in classrooms and can be valuable as an addition to a programmatic response, however, delivered in isolation of all the other elements, and/or outside a programmatic approach across the age levels, this topic-specific work has limited impact and return on investment.



# What is the evidence?

An international systematic review carried out in 2021<sup>2</sup> and spanning the last 30 years, confirmed evidence for the effectiveness of CSE in delivering a range of outcomes for young people including:

- unintended pregnancy prevention
- STIs prevention
- dating and intimate partner violence prevention
- development of healthy relationships
- prevention of child sexual abuse
- an appreciation of sexual diversity
- improved social/emotional learning
- increased media and porn literacy.

Substantial evidence supports beginning in early learning, in a way that is scaffolded, of longer duration, LGBTIQ-inclusive, and takes a social justice approach. It should address a broad definition of sexual health and take positive, affirming, inclusive approaches to human sexuality.

We also know from Australian research that CSE programs are a trusted information source for young people with studies finding between 43–77% of young people cited school programs as a trusted source of information on relationships and sexuality.<sup>3,4</sup>

## Relationship to national policy

Sexual and reproductive health and rights are important to all Australians, articulated to some extent within more than 20 National Strategies and Plans across 7 government portfolios. We believe the fact Australia has expressed the need to progress sexual and reproductive health and rights across so many strategies, speaks to our readiness for a broad definition of sexual and reproductive health.

These 20+ policy documents fall across multiple government portfolios including:

- Health and Aged Care
- Education
- Early Childhood and Youth
- Women and Family Violence
- Prime Minister and Cabinet
- E-Safety
- Foreign Affairs.

The state and territory policy and service delivery landscape in Australia is complex, which also speaks to the need for this work to be led from within the federal and state health portfolios where this level of complexity is routine.

**Appendix A – Policy Cross References.**



---

# How are we faring in Australia?

While Australia is one of the wealthiest nations in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade promotes its investment in international programs supporting CSE within our region<sup>5</sup> the Australian Government has yet to consistently invest in developing a domestic approach to CSE.

This situation is not unique to Australia. The *UNESCO Global Status Report: The Journey Toward Global CSE (2021)* revealed few countries have a national policy specifically on CSE. Where countries mention it within their policies, there is sometimes no guidance on the components of a curriculum nor on how to implement it. In some settings, policies and strategies focus on a range of sexual and reproductive health issues, and others focus more specifically on life skills or the prevention of HIV.

Decentralisation of policy-making, financing and decision-making can enable local governments to ensure that programmes are more responsive to local needs, but it can also lead to inconsistencies in the implementation of sexuality education across a country.<sup>6</sup>

In 2021, the *7th National Survey of Australian Secondary Students and Sexual Health*<sup>7</sup> reported that:

**‘Over 95% of young people reported that they believe relationships and sexuality education (RSE)<sup>1</sup> is an important part of the school curriculum, and 93.0% reported receiving RSE at school, most commonly in Years 8 and 9. However, only 24.8% reported that their most recent RSE class was very or extremely relevant to them.’**

In 2023 research by Curtin University<sup>8</sup> analysing an online survey of 2,427 parents found 89.9% of parents supported schools to deliver RSE<sup>2</sup>, with some modest differences being associated with particular demographic variables. The researchers found that:

**‘Beyond widespread support for RSE, parents emphatically endorsed schools to address a diverse range of RSE-related issues (n = 40 topics). Parents’ responses also provided insight regarding when certain topics should first be introduced and the quality of current RSE provision in schools. Findings from this descriptive overview challenge the currently overstated assumption that parents do not support RSE in schools...’**

While we appreciate Australia’s federated system of government does provide unique challenges for implementation, FPAA believes there remains a significant opportunity to build a world-class, cost-effective and consistent approach to CSE by scaling up and supporting the best of our existing state-based programs and models of implementation, within the context of our unique political, geographical and cultural challenges.

<sup>1,2</sup> Note: This study uses the term RSE to refer to CSE.

# Appendices

## Appendix A – Policy Cross References

Portfolio & Strategy or Senate Report	Existing commitments or recommendations related to CSE
<b>Health</b>	
1.National Preventive Health Strategy 2021–2030	p8 Figure 1, schools as a prevention partner.
2.National STI Strategy 2018–2022 (2023–2030 pending)	p17 Priority area ... supporting sexual health education in schools.
3.National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander BBV and STI Strategy 2018–2022 (2023–2030 (pending)	p23 Priority areas... Support sexual health education in schools.
4. National HIV Strategy 2018–2022 (2023–2030 pending)	p32 Key area for action 22. Implement initiatives to reduce stigma.
5. National Hepatitis C Strategy 2023–2030 – for consultation (pending)	p28 Key area for action 2 Implement.. public education initiatives for...the general community.
6.National Hepatitis B Strategy 2023–2020 (pending)	p30 Key area for action 2 Implement.. public education initiatives for...the general community.
7.National Women’s Health Strategy 2020–2030	p28 Priority Action 1. Promote access to resources for students and parents to learn more about sexual and reproductive health.
8.Senate inquiry report – Ending the postcode lottery: Addressing barriers to sexual, maternity and reproductive healthcare in Australia	R34. ...the Australian Government work with jurisdictions to improve the quality of sexual health and relationships education in schools including building capabilities of educators to deliver this training.
9.National Strategy for the Elimination of Cervical Cancer in Australia 2023	p15 Priority Action 2.1... strong partnerships between health, education and non-government organisations to provide an integrated approach to HPV vaccination literacy that spans key learning areas, is supported by a whole-of-school approach, and fosters health literacy.
10.National Action Plan for Endometriosis	p11 Priority 2. Promote early education on women’s health, delivered in school settings, and provided for all genders.
11.National Strategy to Achieve Gender Equity (pending)	See UNESCO Policy Paper 39 The Case for Comprehensive Sexuality Education <sup>9</sup>
12.National Action Plan for the Health of Children and Young People 2020–2030	Priority Area 3: Tackling mental health and risky behaviours.
p22 Support respectful relationships and good sexual health; Work with partners to identify and promote effective anti-bullying strategies	p28 Action area 1.3: Increase health literacy, including an understanding of risk and opportunities for improving health/Health promotion campaigns to focus on..Sexual and reproductive health including fertility, pre-conception health, parenting and fatherhood.
13.National Men’s Health Strategy 2020–2030	p28 Action area 1.3: Increase health literacy, including an understanding of risk and opportunities for improving health/Health promotion campaigns to focus on..Sexual and reproductive health including fertility, pre-conception health, parenting and fatherhood.

## Appendix A – Policy Cross References

Portfolio & Strategy or Senate Report	Existing commitments or recommendations related to CSE
<b>Health</b>	
14.National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan 2013-2023	P46 Early intervention across the life course...access to culturally safe and responsive sexual and reproductive health services, promotion activities and age-appropriate sexual development education.
15.National Immunisation Strategy for Australia 2019-2024	none – however CSE supports health literacy to facilitate HPV vaccination uptake.
16.Australia's Disability Strategy 2021 – 2031	p16 Policy priority 3... The Strategy should be considered in conjunction with other plans such as the next National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and Children and the next National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children.
17.National Roadmap for Improving the Health of People with Intellectual Disability 2021	none – however CSE supports health literacy.
18. National Action Plan for the Health of LGBTIQ People (10 year, pending)	CSE is LGBTIQ inclusive.
<b>Women, Children, Youth, Family Violence</b>	
19.National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children 2023-2030	p47 Focus Schools Program was highlighted in 'recent reforms' as building on the success of the SHARE Project (2003-2005) which aims to improve sexual health, safety and wellbeing of young South Australians. It is this CSE program model in its current form that we propose scaling up.
<b>Education</b>	
20.The Consent and Respectful Relationships Education (CRRE) measure.	A review and framework development is currently underway.
21.National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse 2021-2030	p34 Theme 1: Awareness Raising, Education and Building Child Safe Cultures...Support the provision of resources for teachers, children and young people's education in areas focused on wellbeing, relationships and safety including online safety.
22.Senate inquiry report – Current and proposed sexual consent laws in Australia	R14, 5.87 The committee recommends that the Commonwealth government, through the Education Ministers Meeting and in consultation with relevant stakeholders, develops a strategy and delivers funding (in conjunction with the states and territories) for upskilling the education workforce, to achieve the consistent and effective delivery of comprehensive Respectful Relationships Education in Australian schools. This should include consideration of mandatory education in the Initial Teacher Education Curriculum.
<b>Communications</b>	
23.National e-Safety Strategy 2022.	p15 Strategic goals, prevention. e-safety is a key theme within CSE.

# References

- i. UNESCO (2018) International technical guidance on sexuality education: An evidence-informed approach. Available at: [www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/ITGSE.pdf](http://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/ITGSE.pdf)
  - ii. Goldfarb E & Lieberman L (2021) Three Decades of Research. The case for CSE. Available at: [https://www.jahonline.org/article/S1054-139X\(20\)30456-0/fulltext](https://www.jahonline.org/article/S1054-139X(20)30456-0/fulltext).
  - iii. Mitchell A., Patrick K., Heywood W., Blackman P., Pitts M. (2014). 5th National Survey of Australian Secondary Students and Sexual Health 2013–2014. Australian Research Centre in Sex Health and Society. La Trobe University, Melbourne, Australia.
  - iv. Johnson, B., Harrison, L., Ollis, D., Flentje, J., Arnold, P., & Bartholomaeus, C. (2016). 'It is not all about sex': Young people's views about sexuality and relationships education. Report of Stage 1 of the Engaging Young People in Sexuality Education Research Project. Adelaide: University of South Australia.
  - v. Out of school comprehensive sexuality education. <https://pacific.unfpa.org/en/publications/out-school-comprehensive-sexuality-education-pacific>. Accessed 11/12/2023.
  - vi. UNESCO (2021) Global Status Report. Available at: <chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/The%20journey%20towards%20comprehensive%20sexuality%20education%2C%20Global%20status%20report.pdf>
  - vii. Power J et al (2022) 7th National survey of secondary students and sexual health 2022, LaTrobe University. Available at: <https://www.latrobe.edu.au/arcs/hs/work/national-survey-of-secondary-students-and-sexual-health-2022>.
  - viii. Hendricks J (2023) Support for school-based relationships and sexual health education: a national survey of Australian parents, Curtin University. Available at: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14681811.2023.2169825>
  - ix. UNESCO (2019) Position Paper 39 The Case for Comprehensive Sexuality Education. Available at: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000368231/PDF/368231eng.pdf.multi>
1. UNESCO (2019) International technical guidance on sexuality education: An evidence-informed approach. Available at: <chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/ITGSE.pdf>
  2. Goldfarb E & Lieberman L (2021) Three Decades of Research. The case for CSE. Available at: [https://www.jahonline.org/article/S1054-139X\(20\)30456-0/fulltext](https://www.jahonline.org/article/S1054-139X(20)30456-0/fulltext).
  3. Mitchell A., Patrick K., Heywood W., Blackman P., Pitts M. (2014). 5th National Survey of Australian Secondary Students and Sexual Health 2013–2014. Australian Research Centre in Sex Health and Society. La Trobe University, Melbourne, Australia.
  4. Johnson, B., Harrison, L., Ollis, D., Flentje, J., Arnold, P., & Bartholomaeus, C. (2016). 'It is not all about sex': Young people's views about sexuality and relationships education. Report of Stage 1 of the Engaging Young People in Sexuality Education Research Project. Adelaide: University of South Australia.
  5. Out of school comprehensive sexuality education. <https://pacific.unfpa.org/en/publications/out-school-comprehensive-sexuality-education-pacific>. Accessed 11/12/2023.
  6. UNESCO (2021) Global Status Report. Available at: <chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/The%20journey%20towards%20comprehensive%20sexuality%20education%2C%20Global%20status%20report.pdf>
  7. Power J et al (2022) 7th National survey of secondary students and sexual health 2022, LaTrobe University. Available at: <https://www.latrobe.edu.au/arcs/hs/work/national-survey-of-secondary-students-and-sexual-health-2022>.
  8. Hendricks J (2023) Support for school-based relationships and sexual health education: a national survey of Australian parents, Curtin University. Available at: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14681811.2023.2169825>
  9. UNESCO (2019) Position Paper 39 The Case for Comprehensive Sexuality Education. Available at: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000368231/PDF/368231eng.pdf.multi>

2024–2028 [Family Planning Alliance Australia pre-budget submission - Scaling up comprehensive relationships and sexual health education across Australia Pre-budget submission 2024–2028](#)

Family Planning Alliance Australia

[www.familyplanningallianceaustralia.org.au](http://www.familyplanningallianceaustralia.org.au)

