

Govt's new school violence prevention resource doesn't meet National Standards and won't actually work, say advocates

Rape prevention advocates have criticised the government's new '[Good Society](#)' resources for schools - pointing out they fail to meet the [National Standards](#) for the prevention of sexual assault through education, and that expert revision of all content is needed to ensure it actually works, and isn't harmful.

Fair Agenda and End Rape on Campus Australia say the government's newly released school resources are concerning, confusing and provide inadequate safety for student survivors. Adding that there is inadequate training for those being asked to drive these conversations with students.

"These resources fall well short of the national standards, and what experts know is needed to actually change behaviours and prevent abuse. If we want to address sexual violence with students we need to arm them with tools to make ethical decisions in emotional and complicated interpersonal relationships. Not these basic and oftentimes confusing resources." said Karen Willis OAM, a prevention educator with 30 years experience.

"More than a decade of research suggests that this content will not work at changing behaviour and preventing violence. Young people are more sophisticated than this content gives them credit for. And sex and consent is far more complicated than videos about milkshakes and sharks at the beach." she added.

"We know that in classrooms of senior students, there will be many who have already experienced rape. This resource fails to properly consider there may be a survivor in the classroom, and even includes inaccurate and inadequate information on avenues for support and reporting." Sharna Bremner, Founder of End Rape on Campus added.

Fair Agenda and End Rape on Campus Australia are calling for the Government to engage violence prevention experts to replace the site's modules on consent and to review all content to ensure it meets the National Standards - including challenging the gender stereotypes that help enable gender-based violence.

"Young people want and deserve training that practically and explicitly helps them understand how to ethically navigate relationships, and to recognise - and feel armed to challenge - unacceptable or coercive behaviour. As well as how to navigate non-verbal cues. It's clear these resources weren't written by people with expertise in violence prevention." said Sharna Bremner, Founder of End Rape on Campus Australia.

The groups have pointed to multiple issues with the 'Good Society' site's content, including:

- Confusing information:
 - "[If a yes is not enthusiastic then it's a maybe, even a no.](#)" Then "[We also have a responsibility to stop whenever the other person says no or isn't an enthusiastic](#)

[yes.](#)” [“To leave the Maybe Zone, you either need to both agree yes, or someone needs to finally decide no.”](#)

- Often, instead of directly addressing the kind of behaviours a student is actually likely to be trying to navigate, the site provides confusing videos, including about [milkshakes](#) and [tacos](#).
- Includes concerning messages like [‘sexual desire... can really distort our thinking’](#)
- Provides incorrect and inadequate information about abuse:
 - [The site’s ‘consent law & rights’ ‘further information’ section incorrectly directs students that they can report ‘any sexual violation’ to the Australian Human Rights Commission](#); and doesn’t provide information about telling your school, a trusted adult, or the police.
 - A page that directs young people to [contact the police if they’re being stalked](#), but doesn’t provide that direction for any other criminal act described, including sexual assault.
 - In a [resource on abuse of power](#), the site links to a support resource that isn’t even available.
- A bizarre ‘Yes No I Don’t Know’ video about [going into water with sharks](#)

“We need to actively challenge the notion that sex is about men pursuing women and persisting until they relent. We need to set an expectation that everyone should be seeking affirmative, enthusiastic and informed consent, and arming young people to understand consent is not just a once-off yes/no conversation. It needs to be present the whole time.” Ms Bremner added.

In addition to replacing and reviewing the site’s content, Fair Agenda and End Rape on Campus Australia are also calling on the federal government to ensure those teaching consent and respectful relationships content are trained by experts.

“We need national investment to ensure the people we’re asking to stand up and act as an authority, and to drive these important but awkward conversations, are appropriately trained and delivering content that will actually work.” said Renee Carr, Executive Director of Fair Agenda.

“The government needs to resource experts to lead this work. That includes investing in training and upskilling everyone we’re asking to act as an educator and authority on this - including teachers.” said Ms Carr.

“In an area this important, that has to go beyond a simple tick box exercise. To really improve safety we need investment in supporting educators to respond to tough questions, challenge harmful attitudes, appropriately support any student survivors in the room, and role model positive behaviours. They also need to be supported to continue the work needed in the yard and the hallways to challenge any toxic attitudes that contribute to the disrespect, entitlement and inequality that in turn enable gender-based violence.” she added.

“Doing this work with people who have experienced such violence without first ensuring safety and engaging in challenging victim-blaming discussions can do immeasurable harm. Gender

stereotypes and dynamics based on gender need to be challenged throughout. Behaviour change is not achieved by a video and lecture. People need to be engaged in multiple forms of experiential and reflective learning. This is what the evidence tells us is actually needed.” added Karen Willis OAM.

“To really address violence we can’t stop at schools. We also need the government to invest in nationwide prevention efforts in our workplaces, universities and TAFEs, residential care facilities, and sports clubs.” concluded Ms Carr.

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Visual references

