

Australian Women Against Violence Alliance (AWAVA) comments on the draft F-10 Australian Curriculum: Health and Physical Education (HPE)

Priority Areas for Improvement

To further enhance the development of the HPE curriculum and its implementation, AWAVA recommends three key focus areas:

- Stronger inclusion of gender equality education messages throughout the curriculum, starting in early childhood
- Teacher education must be prioritised for the effective delivery of the curriculum addressing gender equity and equality and Respectful Relationships education
- Bullying and violence programs, including Respectful Relationships, drawing on a gender analysis

International agreement, negotiated at the 57th session of the Commission for the Status of Women in March 2013, emphasises the importance of focusing on gender equality and teacher education and training, governments must:

*“Develop and implement educational programmes and teaching materials, including comprehensive evidence-based education for human sexuality, based on full and accurate information, for all adolescents and youth, in a manner consistent with their evolving capacities, with the appropriate direction and guidance from parents and legal guardians, with the involvement of children, adolescents, youth and communities, and in coordination with women’s, youth and specialized non-governmental organizations, in order **to modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women of all ages, to eliminate prejudices, and to promote and build informed decision-making, communication and risk reduction skills for the development of respectful relationships and based on gender equality and human rights, as well as teacher education and training programmes for both formal and non-formal education**”*

Agreed Conclusions - Section B (kk), page 10 http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=E/CN.6/2013/L.5

1. Stronger inclusion of gender equality messages in the curriculum, particularly in Respectful Relationships education

To be in line with the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children* the curriculum needs to recognise the impact of gender and other social inequalities as both a cause and consequence of violence against women and girls. It is essential that gender and social equality messages and education are an integral part of the HPE curriculum and mainstreamed for all age groups, starting in early childhood.

The *National Implementation Plan- First Action Plan (2010-2013) (National Plan)* states:

*“To prevent violence against women, the focus needs to be on changing what is seen as acceptable behaviour, based on **gender equality and respectful relationships**. Actions in this area will support young Australians to have the necessary knowledge and skills to have relationships that are free from violence. In line with the commitment under the National Plan to support inclusion of Respectful Relationships in the National Curriculum, governments will build on their current work to create real and positive changes to the culture within schools to support and foster **structural and individual change...**”*

AWAVA supports the inclusion of the ‘role of power in relationships’ in the Healthy Relationships and Sexuality section of the curriculum and the references to exploring gender roles:

- *“exploring the role that power can play in a range of relationships and examining the impact an unequal balance of power can have on a relationship” (page 60)*
- *“critiquing gender roles and expectations in the school, community and the media, and the influence they can have on self-identities, health and wellbeing.” (page 70)*

It is important to address both aspects at all curriculum stages, and that links are drawn between gender and social inequalities and violence against women and girls.

AWAVA is interested to know how ACARA and governments have engaged with each other to draw on evidence to inform the HPE curriculum to drive long-term change on addressing both gender inequality and violence against women and girls. The evaluation from the Respectful Relationships projects and programs, funded under the National Plan, is not due to be completed until April 2014 but is important to the development of the HPE curriculum.

2. Teacher education and training: Pedagogy and professional learning

Pedagogy is a crucial consideration for the effective implementation of the HPE curriculum. The Australian Education Union Policy on Gender Equity 2008 states: the *“implementation of gender policy is most effective when teachers are able to act on their own awareness of the problem. Effective curriculum development can only occur if teachers are involved in the properly resourced planning, implementation and evaluation of programs”* (p. 14). AWAVA request a meeting between our member organisation, the Association of Women’s Educators (AWE), and ACARA to discuss requirements for the design and implementation of adequate teacher pre-service training and in-service professional development, using models of pedagogy for social justice, such as the *Productive Pedagogies* (QSRLS 2001).

3. Addressing the gendered nature of bullying

Activities to address ‘bullying’ need to acknowledge the significance of gender construction as a key factor in a range of abusive and violent behaviours. The *National Safe Schools Framework* calls for “*teacher professional development and classroom curriculum units that address bullying and related issues (e.g. values education)*”; and that schools “*explore issues such as racism, homophobia, **sexism** and other forms of discrimination ... (and) identify relevant legal issues associated with the use of technology, harassment and discrimination **and violence against women.***”

AWAVA believes that forms of gender-based violence against women and girls must be seen as part of the larger problem of unequal power relations between the sexes, in the school, home and work place. Bullying, as a form of gender-based violence against women and girls and a consequence of gender inequality, poses significant challenges to both learning and teaching. It undermines the health and wellbeing of students, both who are bullies and who are bullied (Rigby, 1999). We acknowledge that girls can bully and be violent, however it is important to note that many studies have highlighted that boys are more likely than girls to be perpetrators of bullying (Olweus 1993; Smith & Sharp 1994) and that “*boys are more likely to bully girls than vice versa*” (Rigby, 2003:3). We believe that the nature of bullying and violence in the school environment mirrors that of broader society in that it reflects and perpetuates gender inequality. Therefore gender-neutral violence prevention programs, incorporated within teaching, can perpetuate rather than decrease violence and therefore teaching programs and projects must address the gendered nature of bullying.

Curriculum Recommendations

AWAVA recommends:

- scrutiny of content in all learning areas to ensure an application of a diversity and gender equality lens
- elaborations and examples to include reference to people and events from diverse gender/sexuality identities and groups
- emphasis on the importance of self-awareness in relation to diversity competence
- a greater emphasis on thinking-skills development and critical literacy approaches rather than knowledge
- the articulation and tracking of an aligned and integrated cross-curriculum approach within the documentation
- that on-going discussions be undertaken by ACARA to harness expertise in the area of social/gender justice education, both from academics and practitioners in the field

Specific recommendations based on the HPE Curriculum Draft¹

AWAVA recommends the following additions to the draft HPE curriculum:

¹ <http://consultation.australiancurriculum.edu.au/Static/docs/HPE/F-10Curriculum.pdf>

Aims	page 2	<p>Include explicit examples on the development and use of understandings about gendered identities, social justice and violence. Include equality in below aims:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • access, synthesise and evaluate information to take positive action to protect, enhance and advocate for their own and others' health, wellbeing, safety, equality and physical activity across the lifespan • develop and use personal, interpersonal, behavioural, social and cognitive skills and strategies to promote a sense of personal identity, wellbeing and to build and maintain positive, equal relationships
Strands Key ideas	page 3-4	Gender issues need to be articulated throughout – along with culture, ethnicity, ability etc.
Contexts for learning	page 3-4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Under mental health and wellbeing - eating disorders and body image to be added • Add exploring gender and sexual identities
Movement and Physical activity (Relationship between Strands and Content)	page 3-4	Gendered participation issues – research, provision of resources, recognition of exclusion issues, etc. need to be added
Key Ideas	page 4	<p>Add the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • exploring sexual and gender identities • role of power in relationships • bullying and harassment • difference and diversity • issues such as homophobia, online environments, pornography
Relationships and sexuality	Page 6	<p>Understanding sexual and reproductive health.</p> <p>AWAVA Comment: It is important to include discussions on body image and bodily integrity and framing these discussions within a human rights framework, emphasising girls' rights to control their own sexual and reproductive health. Harmful practices, including female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) and early and forced marriage, should be discussed and supported by teacher education given teachers can assist with early identification for girls at risk of harmful practices. Teachers need to be appropriately trained on the issue of harmful practices to ensure that survivors or girls at risk of FGM/C or early and forced marriage are not further victimised.</p>

<p>Foundation Year 2</p>	<p>page 14</p>	<p><i>“When students transition into school, they bring with them a wide range of health and movement experiences. Students’ sense of self is evolving and they are beginning to develop the capacity to understand and self-regulate their emotions in ways that take into account their own feelings and those of others. They develop the skills to initiate social interactions”</i></p> <p>AWAVA comment: At the point of transition to school, beliefs and skills are often already established, including views which reinforce inequalities as well as violence supporting beliefs and attitudes. This needs to be a key focus area and should involve working with parents where necessary. Teachers need to be appropriately trained in redressing views which reinforce social and gender inequalities.</p>
<p>Year 3–Year 6</p>	<p>page 14</p>	<p><i>“As students move through primary school, the focus broadens also to include the knowledge, understanding, and skills necessary to support and enhance their own health and wellbeing and that of their family and friends. Students are increasingly connected to their world and their peers. Personal and social skills take on an increasing importance, and students become more aware of gender expectations and stereotypes. They look to family, peers, the media, the Internet, and the community for role models”</i></p> <p>AWAVA comment: The notion of stereotypes and role models can be a very fixed socialisation explanation. By fixed socialisation, we mean the theory <i>“that boys and girls experience a passive, sponge-like absorption of messages, from models of masculinity and femininity, which is mediated through social institutions such as the family and schools. Behaviours and identities are seen to be consistent and problems are described as a product of attitudes passively acquired through socialisation. This explanation has been found to be insufficient on a number of levels”</i> (Delaney, 2012: 2). We believe that the gender identities of girls and boys are dynamic, changeable, and adaptable and are not passively shaped, fixed, or static. In terms of gender expectations and gender disadvantage, AWAVA recommends using an approach which would involve <i>“identifying genuine issues of gender disadvantage through asking ‘which girls?’ or ‘which boys?’ and understanding the ways power structures privilege males and ‘the masculine’ both culturally and economically, to decrease the differentiated behaviours that constrain girls’ and boys’ personal development,</i></p>

		<i>relationships, schooling and post-school success” (Delaney, 2012: 3).</i>
Year 7–Year 10	page 15	<p><i>“Students in Years 7–10 are beginning to face more complex life decisions. Their lives and the environments they are living in are changing rapidly. A major influence on these students is the world around them, and their peers become a key source of information and motivation. Increasing levels of access to mobile technologies give students the capacity to be connected and online 24 hours a day. It is important for students to develop the knowledge, understanding, and skills necessary to manage their online engagements, particularly in relation to their online identities and balancing their time online with schoolwork, sleep and other commitments”.</i></p> <p>AWAVA comment: It is important to include developing knowledge on issues such as sexting, cyber-bullying, exposure to/influences of pornography, misogyny, social media based harassment etc. and how technology can be used to abuse, threaten and harm but it can also be used to facilitate safety and evidence against misuse or inappropriate behaviour.</p>
Student diversity	page 15	<p><i>“Same sex attracted and gender diverse students. Same sex attracted and gender diverse young people are becoming increasingly visible in Australian schools. The Australian Curriculum: Health and Physical Education is designed to allow schools flexibility to meet the needs of these young people, particularly in the health context of relationships and sexuality. As students facing these issues exist in all school communities, it is expected that opportunities will be taken when implementing the Health and Physical Education curriculum to ensure teaching is inclusive and relevant to their lived experiences.”</i></p> <p>AWAVA comment: Gender diversity should be explained. It should be ensured that same sex attracted and gender diverse students are not stigmatised, discriminated against, or seen as ‘different’ and that the curriculum should reflect this and teachers should be adequately trained on these issues. Power should be acknowledged here, for example homophobia, transphobia, violence against women and girls. Inclusive and relevant teaching should be defined.</p>
General capabilities	page 19	AWAVA comment: It is important to add gender and socially equal attitudes and behaviours, and social capability to the list of 7 general capabilities

<p>Information and communication technology (ICT) capability</p>	<p>page 19</p>	<p><i>“Health and Physical Education enhances ICT learning by helping students access online health and physical activity information and services effectively and safely to manage their own health and wellbeing. Students further develop their understanding of the role ICT plays in the lives and relationships of children and young people. They explore the nature of these tools and the implications for establishing and managing relationships in the 21st century. Students develop an understanding of ethical online behaviour including protocols and practices for using ICT for respectful communication...”</i></p> <p>AWAVA comment: This part of the curriculum should include the impacts of pornography, sexting, violence, misogyny, bullying, threats, stalking etc through social media</p>
<p>Critical and creative thinking</p>	<p>page 20</p>	<p><i>“Health and Physical Education develops students’ ability to think logically, critically, and creatively in response to a range of Health and Physical Education issues, ideas and challenges...Students will also use critical thinking to challenge societal factors that negatively influence their own and others’ health and wellbeing.”</i></p> <p>AWAVA comment: The curriculum needs to be explicit on the significance of gender construction, harmful and negative expressions of masculinity, and violence against women and girls.</p>
<p>Social health definition (in Glossary)</p>	<p>page 81</p>	<p>AWAVA comment: Definition to include understanding of, and respect for, diversity with regard to various dimensions of gender, sexuality, culture, ethnicity, ability etc., and the prevention of discrimination, bullying and violence</p>

Endorsements

This document has been endorsed in full/in part by the following AWAVA member organisations:

1. Association of Women Educators
2. National Association of Services Against Sexual Violence
3. Women’s Services Network
4. Australasian Council of Women and Policing
5. Australian Women’s Health Network
6. Coalition of Women’s Domestic Violence Services of South Australia
7. Domestic Violence Victoria
8. National Association of Services Against Sexual Violence Australian Capital Territory

9. National Association of Services Against Sexual Violence Northern Territory
10. National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Alliance
11. Network of Immigrant and Refugee Women Australia
12. NSW Women's Refuge Movement
13. National Union of Students Women's Officer
14. Queensland Domestic Violence Refuge Sector
15. Women's Council For Domestic & Family Violence Services WA
16. Women's Essential Service Providers Tasmania
17. Women's Legal Services Australia
18. Women With Disabilities Australia

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http://www.curriculum.edu.au/verve/_resources/National_Declaration_on_the_Educational_Goals_for_Young_Australians.pdf

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Queensland School Reform Longitudinal Study (2001) Key Issues - Productive pedagogies

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