

# **Let's Talk: Young women and non-binary peoples' experience of sex education in Australia**

## **Authors:**

Burdon-Smith L<sup>1</sup>, Delahunty B<sup>2</sup>, Mansilla M and Webb M<sup>3</sup>

## **Background:**

This research project is the second iteration of a report first developed in 2015, by the Young Women's Advisory Group (YWAG) to the Equality Rights Alliance, to platform young women and non-binary peoples' experiences of sex education in Australia. In 2019-2020, YWAG surveyed over 1,000 young women and non-binary youth aged 16-21 nationally about their experiences of sexuality and relationships education at school. Additionally, the survey captured young people's understanding of and engagement with sexually explicit communication.

## **Methods:**

The experiences and opinions of young women and non-binary people were captured through a survey. The data was collected and was cross-referenced according to age, location, language/s spoken, gender, sexuality, disability, cultural background, and Indigeneity. A blend of quantitative and qualitative analysis was completed, aiming to answer questions regarding how sex education is taught in Australian schools and the experiences of young people.

## **Results:**

Sex education being taught by schools does not cater to students needs or experiences. Neither the content nor the learning experience reflected the expansiveness and intersectionality of young people in Australia. Students with diverse gender identities experienced both overt and implicit discrimination in both formal content and informal teaching environments. In 2019-2020, 69% of participants reported that they had not learnt anything from their sex education classes in school that had helped them in their experiences of sex, and 74% reported they had not learnt anything that has helped them in their experiences of dating and relationships.

## **Conclusion:**

Young people want comprehensive, inclusive, accessible, age appropriate and relevant sex education. These research findings will be used to advocate for legislative reform and funding dedicated to providing Comprehensive Relationships and Sex Education in all schools.

## **Disclosure of Interest Statement:**

---

<sup>1</sup> Young Women's Advisory Group (YWAG) to the Equality Rights Alliance (ERA)

<sup>2</sup> Young Women's Advisory Group (YWAG) to the Equality Rights Alliance (ERA)

<sup>3</sup> Young Women's Advisory Group (YWAG) to the Equality Rights Alliance (ERA)

None.

**Acknowledgement of Funding:**

The *Young Women's Advisory Group (YWAG)* to the *Equality Rights Alliance (ERA)* is funded by the Office for Women, Australian Federal Government.