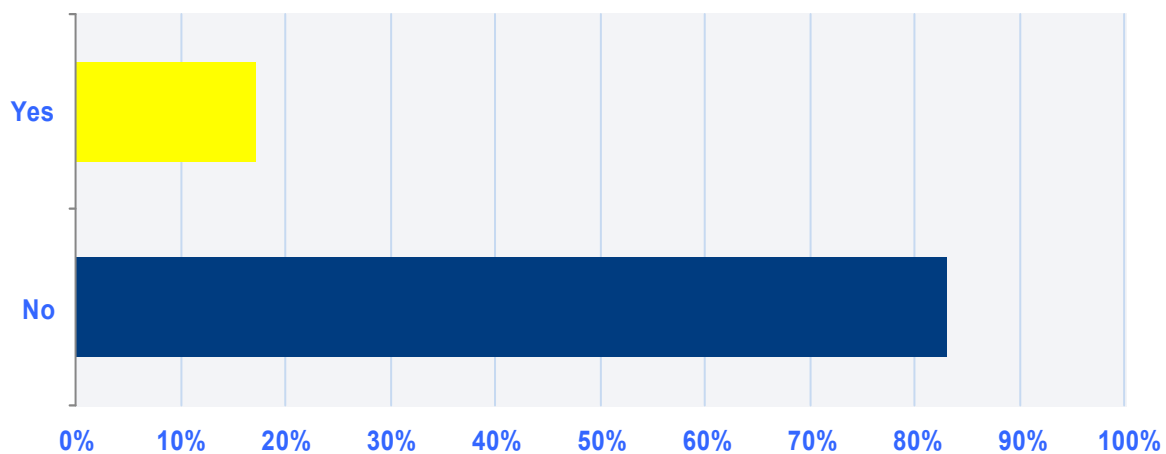




Do You Agree That Decisions On Gender Transition By Students At School Should Be Solely The Responsibility Of The School Principal?



Over Christmas the State Government released a new policy and procedures relating to support for transgender and intersex children and students, at school. The policy is mandatory for all SA public preschools, primary and secondary schools.

Parents have expressed concerns over the process which places decision-making responsibility on the principal; not the parents or a health care professional.

Nearly 90% of respondents were parents and half work in a school.

Should Principals Decide

Only 17% of respondents believe principals should solely make the decisions on children transitioning their gender at school.

Principals themselves were most opposed to the idea with 95% voting against.

Comments from principals explaining their opposition:

- Not the role of schools
- They are not suitably trained
- It is an unfair burden on them
- Not their place to overrule parents.

Teachers were most supportive with 22% voting for principals to decide - only a minority of the teachers who voted were parents.

80% of parents who do not work in schools oppose principals having ultimate authority. Nearly 100% of SSO's surveyed supported parents on this question.

Comments overwhelmingly showed that even among those who endorse transgender support, the school principal is not seen as the appropriate decision-maker.

Should A Parent Have To Approve

67% of respondents voted in favour of a parent needing to approve before a child can transition their gender at school.

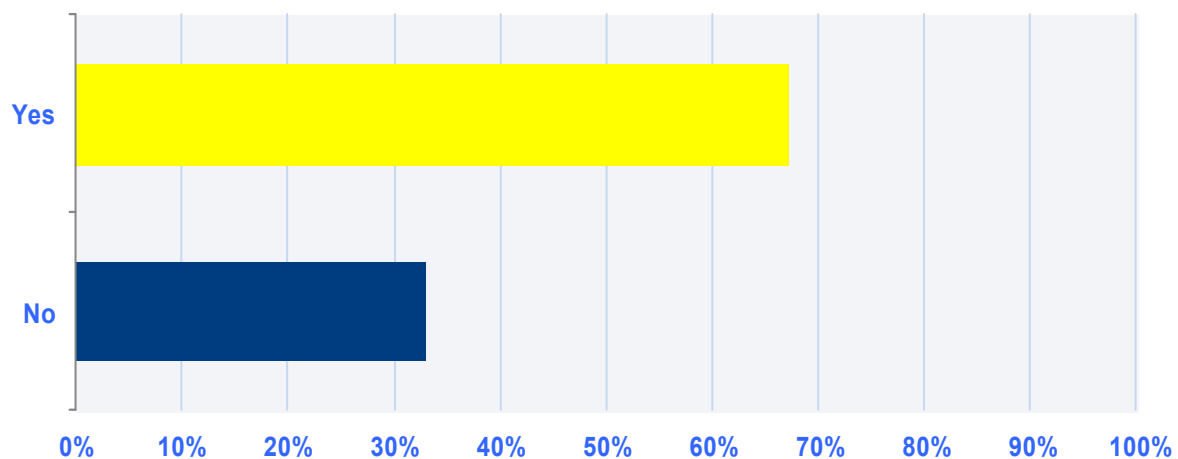
95% of principals voted in support of a parents right to decide - nearly all principals being parents themselves.

81% of parents voted that it should be their decision. Two thirds of SSO's and 81% of other school staff agreed.

28% of teachers voted in support of parents making the decision - though this percentage nearly trebled for teachers who are parents.



Should A Parent Have To Approve Before A Child Can Transition Their Gender At School?



Who Should Decide

When asked who should make the decision regarding a child transitioning their gender at school:

- 67% voted for parents
- 62% voted for a doctor
- 32% voted for a principal
- 40% voted for 'other'

Respondents were able to select more than one option.

Popular options for 'other' proposed by respondents were:

- Psychologist
- The child
- Psychiatrist
- Specialist
- Qualified counsellor
- Child psychologist
- At least two experts

Nearly all principals included parents in their responses. 80% of principals listed 'other' in list, with only 60% including themselves in the process - the same percentage who listed doctor.

Doctor was the most popular option for teachers - at 72%, with principals ranking last with 27%.

'Other' was their second top (at 39%) with parents third (at 33%).

Parents who don't work in schools ranked themselves first with 67%, followed by doctor with 64%, then 'other' and principal both with 30%.

SSO's also favoured parents and doctors, with principals only receiving 16% of their votes.

90% of other school staff ranked parents first and doctors second (at 72%).

Should There Be A Minimum Age

57% of respondents voted for a minimum age for gender transition at school. Principals were the least supportive of an age minimum with 40% voting yes. 61% of parents voted for an age restriction - an idea supported by half of teachers.

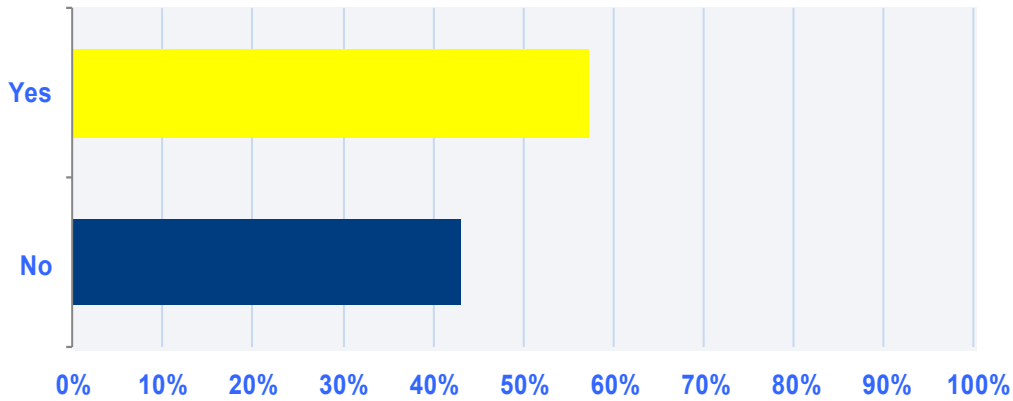
Respondents were equally split, with around a quarter voting for each of the four options: primary school, secondary school, age 16 & age 18.

Among the many comments received, the prevailing reasons for opposing aspects of the policy were that children are too young to make such decisions, the children won't be safe from bullying and violence and that this is not the role of schools.

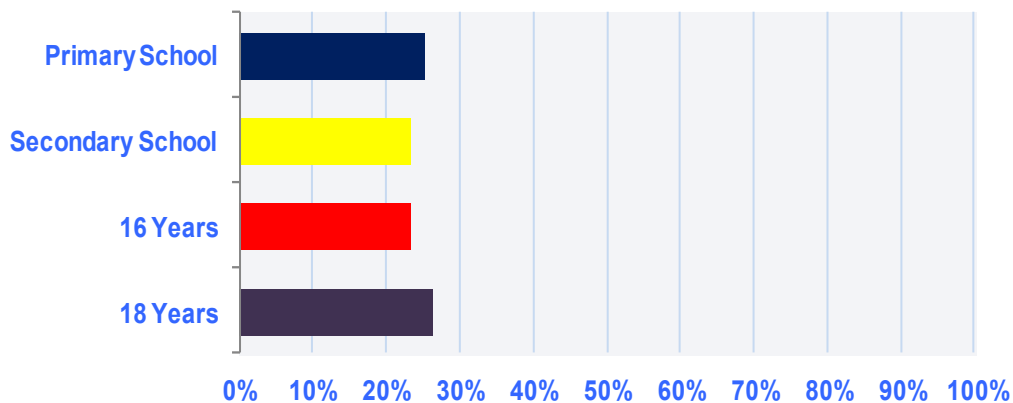
“...As principals we should adhere to the advice of experts.”



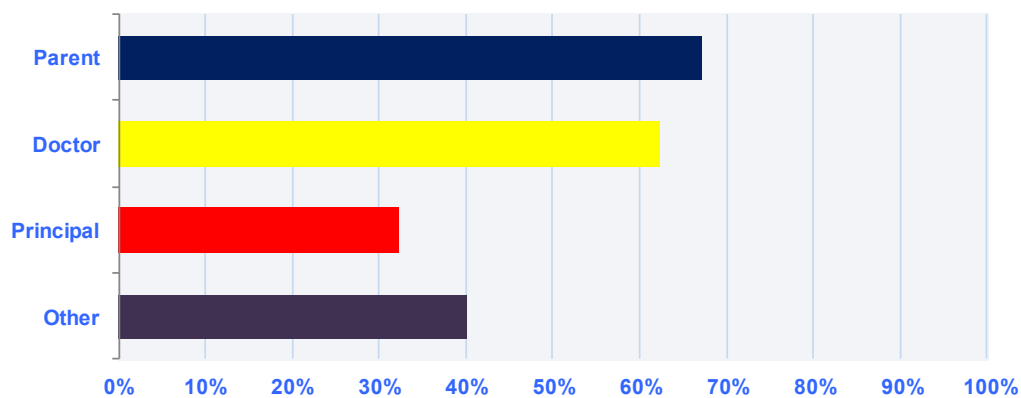
Should there be a minimum age before a child can transition their gender?



If yes, what should the minimum age be?



Who should have to approve before a child can transition their gender at school?



Selected Comments



I can only see problems and conflict if principal's are given responsibility to determine gender transition and identity, how ridiculous.

Last year we had 2 transgender children, this year 1. The previous child transitioned whilst at school and although the family approved this, they did not want it changed on edsas or reports. We were sensitive to the family's wishes along with the child and I think we did a great job.

Genetically a child is either male or female, very occasionally there can be a genetic confusion, however, a child deciding for yourselves they don't like being male/female should not be enough to pander to these ridiculous whims.

This is an issue that needs to be addressed on a case-by-case basis. This factor has deemed this survey tricky to answer.

Effective consultation processes involving the school, health professionals and families would be vital in any transition. I believe schools need to be responsive to the wishes of the families not the other way around.

Principals have enough to do!

I can see the lawsuits...

This is lunacy. Bullying is out of control and we are going to send boys to school in dresses?? When some poor child dies who will you blame then?

I don't see what the big deal is. If kids identify as being a different gender to what they've been labelled at birth, is it really a problem? From the school's end it's not that difficult to accommodate, so why make it so?

A psychologist / psychiatrist should be heavily involved with any decisions as well as parents and the child.

Transition of gender should not be undertaken at school. It leads to complications. Teachers are there to teach not talk individual students through gender confusion - That is a job for psychologists.

Yet again more time spent on minority issues that are not helping educate our children; read, write, do maths, science where we are lagging in world standards....

It is important a full psychological assessment is completed by a psychiatrist prior to any decision being made regarding gender transition.

What next Jay? Are you going to decide what religion our children are?

I'm a principal and This is not the business of schools.

Are we going to receive any training in child sexual psychology, or should we just guess if a child is genuinely transgender?

With all respect to principals, this is too specialised and delicate an area to be decided by anyone but a qualified and trained expert.

What dreamworld do the authors of this policy live in?

Every area of a minors life requires a guardian, even if children have no parents for whatever reason, why should this issue be any different?

This is a minority group and schools should not be changing the way they are run. We don't change for autistic or disabled kids, we get them to blend in.

We keep hearing teachers complain about violence in schools but you think boys dressed as girls are going to make it out alive? Get back to reality.

If a school has transgender students then they must have a gender neutral toilet, along with both male & female toilet facilities. A young female should not be forced to share a toilet area with an 18yo male transgender.

What a load of codswallop. I would dispute the clearly over-estimated percentages spouted by the report.

This is a difficult decision and then transition. All parties need to agree and schools would benefit from all the support health providers can offer to ensure the best possible outcome for the individual student. Definitely needs to be a collaborative and supportive process where all parties are in agreement.

This survey implies that a principal could refuse to agree to a child's request to transition their gender identity, even if health professionals and parents agree they should. I am uncomfortable with this.

A child has no idea of the consequences of a decision like this. They shouldn't be able to do this at a young age just because it seems a good idea or because they are young and confused.

This type of policy is destroying the family unit if my child wanted to change his or her sex I would be very supportive of this. We could discuss all the options available but it's a family issue not the schools or government.

Although I have stated 16 years old, I believe that there should be a strong presence of counselling support and communication with parents, doctors and any other support services involved with any developments and changes.

Walk into an outer suburbs high school cross dressed and see how long you last.

Gender transitioning should not be addressed or supported at school. The school's role is to EDUCATE the child, NOT socially engineer them.

How can it be lawful for the government to tell a parent they are changing the sex of their child?

What if the principal gets it wrong?

This should be up to children, their parents and specialists. Why are schools and principals being dragged into it?

Kids are cruel - doesn't anyone remember what it is like in school? Lambs to the slaughter.

You're putting a target on the poor kids!

Selected Comments



Each case would be different and very difficult for all those involved and the other school students wellbeing must also be considered. This process/decision must not be made in a short amount of time and in only in absolute certainty.

A one size fits all approach will probably always have issues. As with any medical condition any decision making should involve a range of stakeholders and medical professionals with the best interests of the child at the centre.

It should be a consultative process with the family, school and health professionals. While parent approval is ideal it is not always possible from 1 or both parents. The student should be involved at an age appropriate level.

Thanks for seeking feedback on this issue.

This seems like it is from a militant agenda and crosses the bounds into intrusive and possibly divisive interference with families welfare. No need for it.

Children do not always "know" who they are.

How does Weatherill think a school principal should decide my child's gender?

A boy at home and a girl at school - that will do wonders for the child.

Greater support for transgender children, yes. But as principals we aren't trained to deal with sexual dysmorphia.

Are doctors going to teach kids to read and write?

All for transgender support, but what idiot wrote this policy?

I can see why Weatherill released this policy at Christmas when nobody was home.

Is this even legal?

As a principal and a parent, this is the most ridiculous notion I've encountered.

The minimum age should be up to the parents!

What does labor have against parents?

Principals are best placed to run schools not asses a child's gender.

As if schools don't have enough conflict with parents - now we are going to change their children's gender!

despite a parents preferred status of their child - it should NOT be forgotten that they ARE the parents and it is THEIR child - a school is there to educate - not offer a haven for gender transitioning - Too many parental rights are being taken away from parents - a child is not able to drive a car, get a job, have sex etc legally until 16+ nor smoke, drink or vote until 18. A principal or teacher should NEVER undermine the right of a PARENT - which ultimately is what this policy is endorsing.

Weatherill get out of my home!

Up to the child and the parents.

Now Jay Weatherill is going to parents what gender their child is?

Transgender and sex/gender identity outside of the normative heterosexual, usually read as white and mainstream populist person is subject to a lot of misunderstanding and persecution, both by the community, students, parents, teachers and education institutions. time to step up!!! Also. . ask transgender students what they need!

I understand that some parents may be unable to accept a transgender child but this policy is only going to cause more trauma for the child.

I think the survey is too black and white on an issue that really requires a lot of consultation and counselling to be provided to families. At the end of the day however, if a child wants to be recognised as the gender they personally identify with that is there own business and those around them including the school community should support them.

Why does this government keep dumping more and more responsibility on schools. I work in a public school and we have enough to do.

Let's us raise our children Weatherill. You stick to NOT protecting them from abuse.

Thanks SAASSO for bringing this out in the open. Nobody from our school told us about this!

Jay, you don't know anymore about being a fatter than I do. Mind your own business and get back to your job.

A four year old barely knows what gender is. Whose stupid idea was this?

Thanks for the info. It's damn sure the school was never going to tell us.

No wonder the government tried to hide this one.

We are to use one gender-specific pronoun with the child and another with the child's parents. How does this help the child?

Transgender preschoolers?

What happens to the child when they are forced to maintain two identities?

Is Orwell writing Weatherill's policies?

You cannot force tolerance on people. I feel for any child suffering from a gender conflict, but the school over-ruling parents about gender identity isn't the answer.

I'm a therapist. This is a poorly conceived policy.

Jay you just try to tell me how to dress my 7 year old and see what happens.

I work in a school and this is the first I've heard of it. Thanks sasso.

How do I get labor out of my child's closet?

Selected Comments



Leave it up to the experts.

It can't be legal for schools to be able to tell parents what gender they have to raise their children.

Insightful article by Knuckey. This policy is fraught with risk.

I ticked no for should there be a minimum age. I can't imagine a three year old asking to change genders. But it should be decided by experts in the field ... and just isn't a kindy principal.

Leave it up to doctors.

The first anyone knew of this policy was from the article in your magazine (School Post). Our principal told our council they do not support several aspects of the policy.

My 6 year old wants to be Spider-Man. But I don't think she will at 18.

I'm a principal. I'm not aware of any consultation conducted in the development of this policy.

They should reach puberty before we start realigning them.

If they're not old enough to have sex how are they old enough to change their sex?

Thanks SAASSO.

Mr Weatherill, how is it socially inclusive if you exclude parents?

Gender diversity is one thing but claiming a four year old even knows what gender really is just stupidity.

I'm a principal and I do not believe any principal wants to make this decision.

The school should go along with what parents and medical experts decide for the child; who is simply too young to decide for themselves.

10 years olds are too young to drink, smoke, have sex, drive cars, get jobs, vote, decide on a career or what they watch on TV and at the movies ... But they are old enough to change their gender?

Blatant push by Weatherill to impose his values on SA before he is voted out.

Ideally parents should be involved, but some will never accept a transsexual child. I voted yes to principals deciding (I am one), but I would not be comfortable doing so without the endorsement of a doctor.

A principal supported by a doctor if parents won't accept transsexuality.

5 year olds making life long decisions about gender and sexuality - how ridiculous!

My six year old announced she wanted to be batman after seeing the Lego movie. Now she wants to be Wonder Woman because of the toy giveaways at Woolworths.

You'll need security guards in every school to protect these kids.

As principals we should adhere to the advice of experts.

After read the SAASSO article I went through the DECD policy. I'm a principal and I have not received any training on how to assess transgender issues, but according to the policy I am trained.

Transgender students using staff toilets? That will end in court.

Many of my teachers are already hesitant to go on camps. After this, they will be afraid to use the staff bathrooms.

Aspects of this policy will further segregate gay and transgender students. It is poorly thought out.

We will need psychiatrists in every school.

Too far Jay.

I agree some parents are biased against their children being transexual but overruling the, won't work.

Principals aren't doctors.

The policy should apply to any age provided a gender expert agrees with the child.

I find this questionnaire unrealistic. The answers deserve more than a yes or no. There CANNOT be a blanket/ generalised rule for all children/ parents going through this process. Surely it is very individualised and cannot be answered by people who are not aware or possibly sympathetic to the cause.

Idiotic policy. These poor children will be bullied mercilessly and schools are powerless to stop it.

A policy written by bureaucrats who have no idea what it's like in a public school. You let a ten year old boy wear a dress to school and he will never survive. Wake up!

It should not be left up to the parents, or the school principal as these are people who could be naive and lacking understanding of transgender students. A counsellor or doctor should be more knowledgeable and not as biased as they are for the health and well-being of the student.

Experts will not perform gender reassignment or prescribe and medication other than puberty suppression until the child reaches 18 for the very reason we experienced. The child should be given every support but the ultimate decision lies with the medical professionals and the parents with the support of the Principal.

It would be lovely if we lived in a world where this policy would work. But we don't.

The one thing worse than these children suffering about their identity will be fearing for their lives at school.

Anyone who cares about transgender children won't subject them to 12 years of torture.

Until a child has reached a legal age of consent they should not make permanent decisions about gender. Neither should a school make a decision about a child's sexuality without parental consent. I believe it should be a decision made with consultation with many parties. Including members of the health and wellbeing professions.