



SAASSO Submission to The Senate:
Education And Employment Legislation Committee

March 18, 2021

Australian Education Legislation Amendment (Prohibiting the
Indoctrination of Children) Bill 2020

Attention Alan Raine, Committee Secretary
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Introduction

SAASSO - the South Australian Association of State School Organisations Inc. is South Australia's public education parent body and the school Governing Council association for SA's public schools.

SAASSO has been supporting the role and rights of parents in the education of their children since 1923.

SAASSO thanks the Education and Employment Legislation Committee for their invitation to provide feedback on the proposed legislative amendments.

Feedback

SAASSO records show that, going back at least 15 years, SAASSO has not received any complaint or communication from any parent concerned about the indoctrination of children in South Australia's public schools - around gender fluidity, climate change or any other topic.

Lacking existing information from our members in regard to the bill's content, SAASSO conducted an electronic survey of members, commencing on February 15 and ending on February 23.

The Survey

The survey was conducted via the Survey Monkey website. It was the 28th survey SAASSO has conducted by these means.

The survey's title was: *SAASSO Survey 28 - Child Indoctrination Bill.*

The survey was introduced with the following text:

SAASSO has been invited by the Australian Senate to offer feedback on Senator Pauline Hanson's proposal to amend the Australian Education Act 2013. The proposal is referred to as the Prohibiting the Indoctrination of Children bill. Senator Hanson states that the purpose of the bill is to give parents the legal right to protect their children from indoctrination at school, on topics such as 'gender fluidity theory and man-made global warming'. Your feedback via our survey will be included in our submission to the Australian Senate's Education & Employment Legislation Committee – which, in turn, will assist the Australian Parliament decide whether we need these new laws.

SAASSO provided a link to the relevant Parliament webpage, for people to source further information on the bill or wished to make their own submission:

https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Education_and_Employment/Ed-IndoctrinationofKids



Survey Results

816 respondents completed SAASSO's survey.

92.73% of respondents were parents.

38.34% of respondents were school staff.

Asked: Do you feel we need new laws to protect children from indoctrination at school, on topics such as gender fluidity theory and man-made global warming?

- 67.74% of respondents voted NO.
- 32.26% of respondents voted YES.

- 67.43% of parents voted NO.
- 65.89% of school staff voted NO.
- 68.75% of non-school staff voted NO.
- 80.00% of school principals voted NO.
- 65.42% of teachers voted NO.
- 52.69% of school SSOs voted NO.
- 62.22% of 'other' school staff voted NO.
- 70.69% of non-parents voted NO.

SAASSO also received around 60 comments from respondents, accompanying their votes.

Some comments separated the need for greater accountability in schools, or the need to keep politics out of schools - from the actual topics the bill relates to. Some respondents stated that they were voting for the bill, while having no issue with gender fluidity or climate change per se.



Survey Comments

"Will this be a referendum on gender or teachers?"

"How on earth are they going to police this?"

"I'm against gay bashing and climate change is science, but anything to make public schools accountable."

"I work in a school and it's a horribly political environment."

"I agree parents need more rights in their children's education. Still this sounds homophobic."

"I'd prefer a bill requiring teachers to be able to spell."

"Is it limited to just gender & climate?"

"I voted yes because I think some of the gender stuff is being taken too far."

"This sounds like gay bashing, but there's no doubt teachers push their own political agenda."

"Is this a joke?"

"I think many people are still confused by the gender issues."

"I'm not attacking SAASSO. You are just getting our feedback, which is great. But this question is offensive to any intelligent person."

"Hate speech!"

"They will be wanting us to teach from the bible next."

"What next, intelligent design?"

"When did we become America?"

"What's the other side of climate science?"

"Ridiculous idea."

"Climate is science but I'm not sure about the gender issues."

"Did Trump come up with this?"

"Same gender schools are good but should still make available subjects that are available to other co-gender schools and opposite gender schools, same gender schools should also allow gender neutral children to choose the school they attend (but will need proper documentation from a trained child psychologist to confirm)."



Survey Comments

"I think there is enough on TV, in real life and advertising for kids to learn about different beliefs and genders in their early years. I would not be happy with my child learning about this at school. Perhaps in senior years at high school when they can better grasp the concept of all the different genders and relationships. Global warming is also front and centre to them with all the recycling and reducing waste taught at school, and hopefully at home. Again, this is for older children, you have to be old enough to understand the enormity of it all. My child is 9 years old. Thanks."

"We have dealt with students of adolescent age who have trouble with sexual identity. It demands highly professional approaches on behalf of the staff, and to 'ignore it till it goes away' would be a complete abrogation of duty. Leaders amongst our political classes that try to push agendas that deny global warming must be called out. We need leaders who are well versed in scientific processes and one's who do not subscribe to conspiracy theories. One only has to look at the parlous state of USA politics to see that. Call it out for what it is. Pauline is ill informed and poorly educated around these matters."

"I believe that the teaching in schools can be very confusing to young children and unless they discuss it with their parents they can draw conclusions that may not be appropriate for them at a later stage in their life. Children need the protection of their parents from the opinions of the gender pushing minority where a lot of confusion is part of their story."

"It is a stupid proposal. Waste of tax payer money. Everyone who got taught physics does not turn into a physicist! This is madness from the loony Alt-Right."

"School should be about education. Not beliefs or outlooks on life. Teach (genuine) critical thinking skills. Research and questioning should be applauded and revelled. Definitely provide support for any child who seeks it. But it must be addressed case by case. Do not introduce it, develop it and influence it. Children are susceptible to teachers who they may see as mentors and easily guided. The whole proposal of introducing gender fluidity theory at school sounds like grooming to me. It's not okay. It's my job to know my child and help them become them, on a personal level. Not the education department's."

"The teaching of these ideas/topics actually promotes children in thinking they are successful alternatives. In actual fact most children experiment with sexuality somewhere in their adolescents and by labelling them we are creating a reality that just not is."

"It is incredibly unhealthy the direction that our entire education system is heading. Our children need to understand our language, mathematics, history and science. There is nothing wrong with discussing contentious issues, but it is incredibly important to discuss all sides of any issue. The ability to have critical thinking about any subject, to have the ability to listen to someone you don't agree with are important fundamentals to a civilised societies. 3 yr old children are not nearly mature enough to discuss complex issues regarding gender etc. Turning children against their family is pure evil. Read about the rise of fascism and communism during the first half of the twentieth century makes the current spectre of leftist extremism in academia and our education system very dangerous to a democratic system such as ours."

"I believe schools should be accepting of difference and most certainly our younger generation should be taught about climate change as they will wear the consequences."



Survey Comments

"It is important for teachers to not let their personal views, ideology and philosophy colour their teaching, particularly in the field of social science and history. I trust that the teaching profession overall take this seriously. Unfortunately, there have been media stories highlighting that this is not always shared by some teachers, hence the counterreaction in the form of this bill. I do not think this bill is necessary, nor workable. From my own upbringing overseas I recall several instances of teachers ramming marxism down the throats of students. I do not see this happening in Australia, but would urge the teaching profession to continue to be aware of any bias, be truthful, and balanced."

"I do not believe in such a thing as gender fluidity. I also believe that humans have contributed to global warming. These are discussions parents have with children at home. Views change through education. Lack of education on a particular topic means you tend to lean toward more traditional views and values. School is precisely the place all topics such as the above should be researched and discussed. If not, there won't be any improvement or movement forward for our environment or behaviours."

"These lessons / ideas are for families to discuss with their children."

"Schools are meant to be about education, not promote misinformation. Should parents have 'alternate' views on these subjects (which to me smacks of denial) I don't believe we should be promulgating such views in law!"

"I believe existing laws, systems and regulations can safeguard against indoctrination."

"This is outrageous censorship, not "protection from indoctrination". A step towards USA culture, which allows the crazies to ignore facts and science and decide whatever they want is true based only on their beliefs. Not only do I disagree with Pauline Hanson's proposal, but I think the opposite is needed. In today's world children need to learn how to do vigorous fact-checking to be able to guard against being "indoctrinated" by fake news on the internet and in the media."

"Schools are not indoctrinating children in schools about any topics. Schools are a place of education and learning, about growing and developing and they should always be a place where every child no matter what their background, gender, race, ethnicity should feel welcome. Not allowing conversations about gender especially, is excluding and devaluing students."

"Educators are to provide students with multiple views on all topics, using evidence so students are able to make educated assessments and conclusions using facts. Indoctrination is very different to providing students with facts."

"I strongly oppose this bill as I believe it will foster opposition to fact based education on issues such as gender fluidity and climate change and promote the personal beliefs of parents to the detriment of their child's education."

"Children need to learn about the science of global warming and should be aware of all current information about gender."



Survey Comments

"School should provide children with the basics to build life long learning on, things like maths, language, art, potentially history. Social theories should be left to children to discover in their own cultural construct."

"I want the government to interfere and stop this gender fluidity theory. We parents want to more in control of what our kids learn at school."

"Students are well aware of these concepts through social interactions. School is an environment where they can safely ask questions and seek unbiased responses and information."

"I object to Hanson's view that teaching children about socially relevant and responsible topics is indoctrination. Families will always have the right to hold beliefs contrary to social norms, but denying facts which the recognition of have the potential to save the lives of our children and our planet is not the role of schools."

"We allow cultural studies and education on a range of topics that are relevant to todays society but not of mainstream following - eg religious events for Christmas and Easter and Aboriginal studies to learn about relevant histories and events. These are all about widening awareness, understanding and alternate practices or perceptions. We live in an evolving world and normalising differences will hopefully lead to a more tolerant and inclusive society for everyone. As to man made global warming this is based science. Schools are required to educate students - who have free will - so to speak of 'indoctrination' is inflammatory and disrespectful to everyone."

"Indoctrination is an inflammatory and subjective concept. I would be concerned for example if my children were exposed to the concepts and values put forward by Pauline Hanson. The current curriculum and legislative framework safeguard children and the community as well as providing opportunity to learn about and develop their own values and beliefs in school communities that are responsive and inclusive."

"Engaging students in robust discussion about issues that are central to their well-being defines our education system."

"Every person has the right to choose what gender they want to be and global warning is a thing so why wouldn't we teach. How would they know about it if we didn't teach it."

"Children need to provided with a safe and supportive environment to express their diversity, including gender and sexuality. Being given information to build their awareness of human diversity is crucial to the future well-being of some students and a more accepting and supportive society. As for climate change, the science is broadly accepted by scientists and lawmakers. Australia must retain a science-based curriculum. Asserting that presentation of human-induced climate change (not gender biased language of 'man-made') in schools is akin to indoctrination is perverse logic."

"These topics are based on science, and are not indoctrination. Living in a society requires obligations from its members to understand how the world works. Some people don't have the aptitude to separate science from politics and want to bury their head in the sand. This is a ridiculous proposal for a law."



Survey Comments

"I think that it is important to discuss these and other issues that are vital to our children's present and future."

"Not sure about gender fluidity, but man made global warming is based on scientific facts."

"I don't think everything should be taught, with the exception of global warming.... As that is real and proven. But I feel it should be each to their own, in saying that if a child wants to know about something they can ask, but it shouldn't be taught openly."

"I just don't know what to say - how on earth could this legislation be considered?"

"Climate change due to human behaviours is not up for debate. The science is in, to pretend otherwise is to be stupid."

"The topics need to be structured, nationally uniform, balanced and impartial to the individual teachers ideologies."

"These aren't theories, they are fact."

"Ridiculous."

"Schools are no place for this. Teachers should not abuse their extraordinary influence and unique platform to espouse their own views and drive agendas."

"Parents should have the curriculum outlined to them and a summary of the content of lessons on potentially confronting topics. If a parent disagrees with what is being taught to their child, they have the opportunity to share their own opinion with their child. Parents should take more onus for their children's learning, even using a potential difference of opinion in teachings as a life lesson to discuss with their child. Parents and teachers should work together to educate the next generation in a mature and united way, even when there is disagreement on content, as an example of appropriate adult behaviour in problem solving and working through conflict."

"I find the underlying thoughts behind this very troubling . As a parent of a child that transitioned while they were at school I understand the importance of clear evidence on this topic."

"Global warming is real. The way our current political class is going my only hope for the future lies with my children."

"Teaching our children science is not indoctrination."