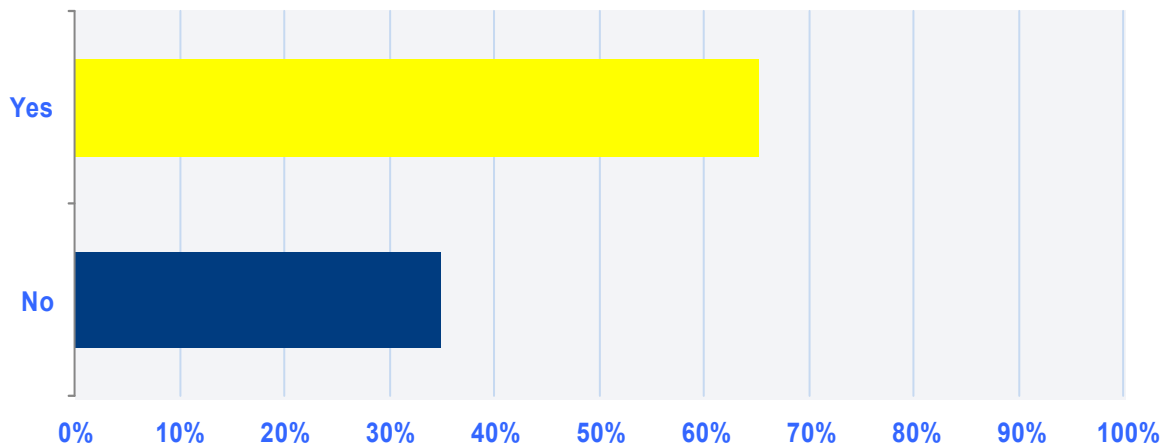




Should Schools Teach Children About Forced Marriage?



A Federal Parliamentary Inquiry believes education in schools is one of the best ways to protect young girls from the horrendous crime of forced marriage - particularly children new to Australia, who are not aware of our laws and their rights.

A recommendation from the inquiry is for governments to consider including the topic of forced marriage in school curricula.

SAASSO recently asked parents and educators what they think....

When asked if schools should teach children about forced marriage:

- 65.07% voted, 'Yes'
- 34.93% voted, 'No'.

Of the 982 respondents:

- 92.81% were parents
- 42.40% worked in schools.

64.65% of school staff are in favour of teaching about forced marriage, compared with 65.05% of non-school staff.

Of the 115 principals to complete the survey, 67.83% want schools to educate children about forced marriage.

Teachers were least enthusiastic of school staff, with 56.76% believing schools should engage on the topic.

School support staff were more supportive, with 70% of 'other' wanting schools to inform children about their rights.

- 67.70% of parents want children to be warned about forced marriage.
- Non-parents were the least concerned about forced marriage, with only 32.86% wanting the topic discussed in schools.

While some respondents questioned the need for such a discussion in Australia, most comments acknowledged a responsibility to all Australian children.

A number questioned whether schools were the best channel to inform children about the issue.

Some also alluded to an already crowded curriculum, while others believe the topic could be included in subjects already taught in schools.

Selected Comments



Definitely should teach this, however, will we be allowed to??

This is something teachers/schools may need to be aware of but as this only effects one demographic in schools, there is no need to burden all children about it.

Children need to be aware of their rights just as adults do.

I feel our children should be aware of this as it is not ok to force anyone in to marriage, every person has the right to choose their life partner. It should be openly talked about.

Children living in Australia need to be made aware that some of the customs their parents brought with them to their new home are inappropriate, unacceptable and at time immoral and against Australian law.

I think it should be taught in high school. Definitely not a topic for primary school age children.

This should be included at secondary level only.

We should not condone or facilitate by default this culture of barbaric, cruel, illegal child abuse. Information is power. Empower the children and save them.

In this day and age I would've thought that forced marriage would be taught in schools. Instead of teaching this safe schools rubbish that has no bearing on the individual child corrupting young minds.

Teach it by all means but not with any moral relativism and not with any kid gloves on the culture/religion front. Let's call it for what it is by any measure - wrong.

Enough is enough. Please stop placing so much onto school's responsibility.

Please get back to teaching!! Reading, Writing, Arithmetic. Perhaps in High School in Cultural Classes.

Hopefully it will be taught sensibly and not in a way that makes the child feel bad.

This is a terrible thing to be happening in this country and no one should have to be forced into a marriage.

I think teachers are tasked with too many issues to teach. A lot of social issues should be discussed at home.

It can take the place of the pointless research project.

As part of a broad scope approach to the rights of women in Australia. My concern is that it could be used to target certain ethnic minorities, which will probably have the opposite effect than intended.

Provided schools are allocated resources and training.

Only in Secondary, not during primary years.

To make young people aware of our laws and rights to save young girls perhaps year of misery.

Stage 1 child studies does look at this issue.

This would be better communicated by experts brought into schools.

People who participate in forced should not be permitted in Australia and should be deported if they are found to be involved in this practice. By the time a child reaches school the decision is probably already made and what can a single child do in this situation, disagree or argue with parents? The repercussions could be horrific.

It's not really relevant in Australia. There are other issues that schools could focus on, like stamping out drugs, increasing the work ethic of Australians, not relying upon government handouts etc.

As well as helping children identify a situation if they are thrown into it, this can also help other children understand and empathise with the challenges that many others (esp girls) face in life. It's an ugly topic but children live in the world and they will be better able to deal with the good, the bad and the ugly if they are aware of these things via a safe conversation in safe environment (such as a classroom). Thanks.

As part of high school education yes and possibly year 6 or 7.

Yes to question 4 as long it is an awareness of the illegal marriage.

All children should know that forced marriage is not right and should have avenues to report and be saved if forced into this situation.

Schools should also teach about every other area of concern where other cultural, religious, social and even familial "tradition" conflicts with what is lawful in Australia.

I believe that young girls and young women should be educated in the area of forced marriage, so it can give them the necessary information to stop this from happening in Australia and to educate them in their personal rights.

It is the parents that need to be educated about this all the laws of living in Australia. The girls will have no choice as it is a cultural expectation the government needs to protect these girls by enforcing laws that ban this.

Include as part of the Child Protection Curriculum at High School age only. Isn't it interesting - the law is kids can't get married until 18 however it seems 'Safe Schools' encourages sexual activity before this age....

No topic should be off the table when it comes to educating our children. (age appropriate).

Need to make this issue aware to the public.

Content needs to be provided to teachers for a consistent approach.

Please let commonsense prevail, our education system is a mess. We need to go back to basics. My 15yr old and I discuss current affairs regularly. He and his friends are very aware of the state of our society and are not impressed by the disgusting state of the Education dept.

Girls must be aware of the dangers of forced marriage, however it will be difficult for them to go against the wishes of their parents.

Thanks SAASSO. This is the first our school has heard of this proposal.