



**Te Wāhi Wāhine o  
Tāmaki Makaurau**

AUCKLAND WOMEN'S CENTRE

Hon. Erica Stanford  
Minister of Education  
[E.Stanford@ministers.govt.nz](mailto:E.Stanford@ministers.govt.nz)

9 May 2025

Tēnā koe Minister Stanford,

### **Relationships & Sexuality Education Draft Framework**

As I wrote to you in March, gender violence is endemic in this country – around a third of women in Aotearoa New Zealand have experienced sexual violence ([Ministry of Justice, 2019, p.82](#)), and more will have experienced other forms of intimate partner violence.

Relationships and Sexuality Education is a key cornerstone of primary prevention of violence against women, girls and other diverse gender identities.

As Minister of Education you have a moral responsibility to ensure that the relationships and sexuality education framework is fit-for-purpose to reduce this horrific burden.

We are deeply concerned about the proposed RSE framework and we call on you not to accept it – but instead to go right back to the drawing board and ensure the correct people are in the room to get it right from the start. The draft framework's proposed erasures of te Ao Māori and of diverse gender identities, as well as the contemptibly inadequate and frankly often-bizarre approach to consent education, will greatly reduce the effectiveness of this vital violence prevention tool.

In the meantime, and until a good-faith replacement is made, we again urge you to immediately reinstate access to the 2020 Relationships and Sexuality Education Guidelines to promote respect for women and people of all genders and sexualities.

Please see attached our feedback via the Ministry's online form.

Ngā mihi nui

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## Auckland Women's Centre portal responses re RSE framework 9 May 2025

**1. For Years 0–3, the content included in the draft RSE framework is appropriate for 5–8-year-old students.**

Strongly disagree	<b>Disagree</b>	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
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**2. If required, please comment about which content should be aligned differently to the age of the learner.**

*“saying ‘yes’ or ‘no’ to a request from others is called ‘giving consent.’* Please ensure all approaches/learning outcomes about the vital area of consent are evidence-based. This seems to be terminology-focussed rather than principle-focussed, and it is inaccurate. If ‘consent’ as a term is introduced, children need to know the lack of ‘no’ is not consent and – in fact – it may be better to start with the principle of bodily autonomy than with consent on its own, divorced from context. And/or if context of consent is given, then it should include cultural context to reinforce understanding. For example, things that could be included if experts in te ao Māori thought it appropriate might be marae tikanga eg you cannot enter a marae without consent, there is a process. Further learning – consent can depend on conditions: you would not enter a wharehau with your shoes on.

**3. For Years 4–6, the content included in the draft RSE framework is appropriate for 8–11-year-old students.**

Strongly disagree	<b>Disagree</b>	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
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**4. If required, please comment about which content should be aligned differently to the age of the learner.**

*“identify and respond to gender stereotypes. For example, favourite colours and career aspirations”* – this is unclear – critique must be included, eg of stereotypes as unnecessary and limiting. Power analysis should be included, even at this age: eg who/which group benefits from the stereotypes? (given they are a tool to suppress gender minorities)

*“there are implications for giving consent.”* – this statement requires more context as taken as read, it would seem to encourage coercive behaviour in relationships and over bodies: “you gave consent, so I can do what you consented to even if you have changed your mind in the meantime.”

*“There are ways to respectfully accept when people refuse consent. For example, “Can I borrow your hoodie?” “No, it is special to me.” “OK, I understand, I have special items too.””* – This is a little unclear. A simple “sweet as” would suffice. People withhold consent, rather than refuse it (ie, to give consent, they have to proactively indicate “yes”; it’s not enough that they didn’t say no”)

*“respond in situations where consent is not given by one of their peers.”* More information required.

*“the way roles and responsibilities work for family members might be different in different households. This can be due to different religious beliefs, cultural backgrounds, or different family make-ups”* – this needs linking to the gender stereotyping critique.

*“online content may be unreliable, untruthful, or unsafe. They should not consider what they encounter online as an example of ways to behave towards others”* – this also applies to television and books. We need to be giving children critical and ethical skills to discern between role models to follow, and which ones to avoid. Just telling them not to follow someone’s behaviour – particularly if that someone is charismatic or looks popular – won’t work. Are we talking about how they can treat each other ethically online, whether or not they or the other person are anonymous? Also requires a discussion of anonymity and the idea that people can present online in ways that do not reflect who they are (grooming, for example).

**5. For Years 7–8, the content included in the draft RSE framework is appropriate for 11–13-year-old students.**

**Strongly disagree**

Disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Agree

Strongly agree

**6. If required, please comment about which content should be aligned differently to the age of the learner.**

*“in any relationship, they should prioritise their own needs”* – an adjective such as “safety” is required before “needs”, otherwise this encourages abuse of power.

**7. For Years 9–10, the content included in the draft RSE framework is appropriate for 13–15-year-old students.**

Strongly disagree

**Disagree**

Neither agree nor disagree

Agree

Strongly agree

**8. If required, please comment about which content should be aligned differently to the age of the learner.**

*“everyone has the right to privacy and autonomy over their own body.”* – this should be introduced far earlier – at Year 0.

*“gender stereotypes [sic] can exist in society. For example, males may be expected to dress in a masculine way, or females may be expected to look after children at home. Culture, religion, and family values can often influence these.”* – Again, this is unclear – critique \*must\* be included, eg of stereotypes as unnecessary and limiting. Power analysis should be included: eg which groups benefit from the stereotypes?

The following should be introduced at earlier ages: “*identify what constitutes harmful behaviour and why, and that such behaviour is unacceptable, emphasising that it is never the fault of the person experiencing it (including online).*” And “*analyse enablers and barriers to effective verbal, non-verbal and digital communication, including situations where they may need to seek help*”

We strongly support the inclusive phrasing such as 'people who menstruate'.

**9. For Years 11–13, the content included in the draft RSE framework is appropriate for 15–18-year-old students.**

Strongly disagree	<b>Disagree</b>	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
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**10. If required, please comment about which content should be aligned differently to the age of the learner.**

“*male and female bodies are sometimes treated differently in society and they and their peers may interpret this in a variety of ways, and this could affect consensual behaviour.*” – needs to be clearer: women and their bodies are often disrespected in multiple ways – this is not ok. Consent must always be clear.

**Overall feedback**

**\* 11. There is no content in the draft RSE framework that should be removed.**

<b>Strongly disagree</b>	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
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**12. Please comment about what specific content should be removed from the draft RSE framework.**

Do not be encouraging young people to prioritise their own (sexual) needs in a relationship. We have read and agree with the Backbone Collective’s answers for questions 1-11.

**Overall feedback**

**\* 13. There is no additional content that should be added to the draft RSE framework.**

<b>Strongly disagree</b>	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
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**14. Please comment about what additional content should be included, and at what age.**

- affirmation of gender diversity, trans experiences, and non-binary identities, at all ages. At its core, the draft framework’s current erasure of trans and non-binary rangatahi, is harmful for the gender-diverse rangatahi themselves - who already face higher rates of harm – but also for cis people, particularly cis-women. Misogynists gain power from policing gender identities and sexualities, dictating gender conformity and restrictive gender expressions.

Conservative gender norms lead to the devaluing and disrespect of everyone who is not a straight cis man. Transphobia invalidates many deeply-held gender understandings and traditions around the globe. Terms such as takatāpui and faāfaine reflect long-standing traditions of recognising and accepting gender diversity within diverse cultures.

Our vision is that all women, trans and cis, and gender minorities, enjoy full access to our human rights, including the right to live in safety, and the right to live free of gender discrimination. Part of that means that women can enter public toilets without fear that they will be challenged for not being “feminine” enough, or “cis-gender” enough. That requires acknowledging and affirming trans identities.

- Te Ao Māori at all ages, in order to uphold te Tiriti o Waitangi. Currently, this isn't just a gap — it's an active erasure. It fails government obligations, and fails the next generation. This erasure will reduce the wellbeing and safety of our future generations of all ethnicities in Aotearoa. Any and all Māori content, framework and translation should of course, be guided by experts in te ao Māori.

- In the spirit of manaaki from tangata whenua to tangata tiriti, we expect Pacific, Asian and other cultures to be mentioned and directly considered in the RSE framework, at all ages.

- Currently the consent education misses the point. Consent isn't just about getting a yes. It's about understanding power, pressure, fear, silence, and safety. It's about recognising that consent can change — that people might say yes when they're scared, or freeze when they mean no. It's about coercion and coercive control (different things). There needs to be acknowledgement of hierarchies and power imbalances, and how gender, age, or past trauma shape someone's ability to consent. There needs to be tools for intermediate and secondary school students for recognising red flags in real relationships – and tools at all ages for recognising when family members are not safe, and what to do about it. Surface-level consent education won't keep young people safe. It will keep them unprepared and unsupported — especially those already most at risk.

- there needs to be mention of stalking. Stalking is about control. It creates fear, isolates people, and makes them feel like they have to say yes just to stay safe. From intermediate school, students need to learn what it is, how to name it, how to ask for help, and how to support someone going through it.

- there needs to be discussion of pornography, age appropriate, from intermediate age and possibly earlier. Porn is shaping how young people understand sex, intimacy, and power — there needs to be acknowledgment of how porn intersects with coercion, violence, unrealistic expectations, or body shame. There needs to be critical thinking tools taught, and unpacking of how mainstream porn often centres male pleasure and objectifies women and queer people.

Ignoring the existence of porn doesn't protect young people. Instead, it leaves them to figure it out alone, online, without the language or guidance to unpack what they're seeing and what it means.

- As discussed in questions 1-10, all discussion of stereotypes must be critical: where they've come from, how they shore up power dynamics between genders on a societal level as well as an individual level, and how they are limiting and unnecessary – on all genders.
- There needs to be acknowledgement that trans students, disabled students, Māori and Pasifika youth are at far greater risk of bullying. Not just from other students, but often more likely from teachers, systems, and curriculum content itself.

**\* 15. Overall, the content covered in the framework will support effective relationships and sexuality education.**

**Strongly disagree**

Disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Strongly Agree

**16. (Optional) Please comment.**

The sensitive and vital curriculum area of relationships and sexuality can have enormous impact on how children & young people see themselves; keep themselves safe; and treat others around them with respect and care.

We don't need vague encouragements to "respect each other." We need relationship and sexuality education that names power, challenges injustice, and actively dismantles the harmful norms that keep getting our people hurt.

The draft framework presents the world solely as a monocultural gender binary – which is misleading and abusive in its own right – and gives them little understanding of power, coercion and control. The proposed changes breach te Tiriti o Waitangi and will put children and rangatahi of all gender identities – particularly students targeted by persistent structural marginalisation – at higher risk of harm from family violence and sexual violence.

We strongly oppose the erasure of humanity in this framework.