



PPTA

NEW ZEALAND POST PRIMARY
TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION
TE WEHENGARUA

www.ppta.org.nz

**MAKING
SCHOOLS
SAFE FOR
PEOPLE OF
EVERY
SEXUALITY**

MEMBERS' GUIDE

February 2009



Introduction

The purpose of this booklet is to raise PPTA members' awareness of their relationships with, and responsibilities to, people of diverse sexualities in their school communities - colleagues, students and families.

The Human Rights Act 1993, the Bill of Rights, international conventions, the National Education Guidelines, the National Administrative Guidelines, the association's Code of Ethics, association policy adopted at annual conferences, the obligatory section in school charters and the demands of natural justice all implicitly or explicitly require us to act and to encourage our colleagues to act in ways that enhance and promote the dignity of all our students and colleagues and that recognise their differences and sensibilities.

We New Zealanders are learning to make our communities and our schools safer and more welcoming for people of diverse cultures and beliefs and for those with disabilities. However, the area of diverse sexualities has been less well addressed.

The people in each staffroom and each class we teach are likely to represent a range of sexualities. Assumptions should not be made about people's sexual orientation or gender identity.

Attitudes

Students, whether they are aware of it or not, take cues from their teachers in forming their attitudes towards themselves and others. Our dealings with each other and with our students display our sensitivity or our insensitivity and our bias or lack of bias.

We teachers go out of our way to avoid prejudging colleagues and students on the basis of their gender, race, economic status, religious beliefs or physical ability or disability. We have learnt over recent generations not to run down minority groups by speaking scornfully of or to them, by calling them names or by telling jokes at their expense. We discourage our colleagues and students from doing these things and



many of us challenge them if we learn of it happening.

One of the last prejudices to fall away is homophobia, the irrational fear of and antipathy towards people whose sexuality is other than heterosexual. There are still people in the community who threaten gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex (GLBTI) people and whose words and actions belittle them. Many who would allow adults to live their different lives refuse to accept that young people have the same rights adults have or to accept that young people's sexuality may be already established.

Some people still confuse homosexuality with paedophilia. There is evidence of high rates of suicide and of other risk-taking and self-destructive behaviours among young people whose sexual orientation is not heterosexual. Research links this to our culture's limits on acceptable male or female behaviour.

There is evidence that a frequent cause of low self-esteem, of the hopelessness about the future that leads a person to take risks or even to take their own life, is the constant "proof" they see that others do not accept them.

Our professionalism requires that our attitudes and conduct towards students and colleagues build self-esteem and avoid contributing to self-destructive behaviour.

Schools are safe when teachers promote personal respect and emotional and physical safety in all their relationships and encourage their colleagues and students to do likewise.

Homophobia

Teachers display or reinforce homophobia when they:

- refer disparagingly to or use derogatory names about people whose sexuality is oriented toward their own gender or who do not fit gender stereotypes
- do not challenge others who speak in this way or use such names
- discriminate against a student who fits a stereotype



of homosexuality when seeking volunteers to answer questions, do tasks or be in groups or teams

- make assumptions about sexuality on the basis of physical or social aspects of a student's or teacher's appearance or behaviour
- dismiss public or historical figures as less worthy of respect because of their sexuality or gender identity.

Strategies for creating a school that is safe for people of every sexuality

Teachers help to make schools safe for colleagues and students and enhance their self-esteem when they:

- treat everyone with respect and acceptance
- create supportive environments where all students feel their contribution is valued
- celebrate diversity and avoid reinforcing gender stereotypes
- use inclusive language which makes no assumptions about a person's sexuality
- do not make disparaging remarks or use language that implies one sexuality is better
- include role models of people of diverse sexualities in their teaching
- challenge colleagues and students who continue to display prejudice
- frequently reflect on their own attitudes and behaviour
- know what action to take in the event of an incident of discrimination or harassment.



Getting started in your school

Access the PPTA kit for branch action, *Affirming Diversity of Sexualities in the School Community* on the PPTA website, www.ppta.org.nz.

PPTA support and other agencies

PPTA has people at regional and national levels ready to advise and to offer support on this issue, as do the Human Rights Commission and local gay and lesbian support groups and social agencies.

Read *PPTA News* and visit the Safe Schools Taskforce page on the login area of www.ppta.org.nz for more information, policy, resources and contact details.

The Human Rights Commission can be contacted toll free on 0800 496 877 as well as on their website www.hrc.co.nz and e-mail infoline@hrc.co.nz.

Gay and Lesbian helpline contacts (as at August 2003)

www.rainbownz.net.nz provides contacts for a wide range of GLBTI groups. The phone numbers below are for the major centres only.

Auckland	Gayline/Lesbianline	09 303 3584
Hamilton	Gayline	07 854 9631
Rotorua	Gaylink	07 343 9429
Rotorua	Lesbianline	07 346 8724
Palmerston Nth	Gayline/Lesbianline	06 358 5378
Wellington	Lesbianline	04 499 5567
Wellington	Gay Switchboard	04 473 7878
Blenheim	Gay/Lesbian Contact	03 578 2259
Christchurch	Lesbianline/Gayline	03 379 4796
Christchurch	24 hour Infoline	03 379 3990
Dunedin	PFLAG South	03 477 2000
Invercargill	Rainbow Connection	03 216 4709



Advice and guidance

For further advice consult your local PPTA office.

Auckland

4 Western Springs Road, Morningside
P O Box 52 006, Auckland 1352
ph (09) 815 8610 fax (09) 815 8612
email: auckland@ppta.org.nz

Hamilton

Level 1, ANZ Building, 650 Te Rapa Rd, Te Rapa
P O Box 20 294, Hamilton 3241
ph (07) 849 0168 fax (07) 849 1794
email: hamilton@ppta.org.nz

Palmerston North

Level 2, Guardian House, cnr The Square and Main Street
P O Box 168, Palmerston North 4440
ph (06) 358 4036 fax (06) 358 4055
email: palmerston@ppta.org.nz

Christchurch

Latimer View House, 215 Gloucester Street
P O Box 13-005, Christchurch 8141
ph (03) 366 6524 fax (03) 379 4011
email: christchurch@ppta.org.nz

Dunedin

Level 1, Queens Garden Court, 3 Crawford Street
P O Box 1561, Dunedin 9054
ph (03) 477 1311 fax (03) 477 1804
email: dunedin@ppta.org.nz



This pamphlet has been produced by NZPPTA / Te Wehengarua and provides the association's contractual interpretation. Nevertheless, it is not a substitute for the collective agreement and should be read in conjunction with the relevant clauses of the appropriate collective agreement.

Pamphlets in this guide series include:

- Beginning teachers
- Community education
- Employment relations problems/Personal grievances
- Guidance for teachers in their relationships with students
- Guidance for teachers working with Pacific students in secondary schools
- Guidance for teachers working with Māori students
- Introducing Te Huarahi Māori Motuhake
- Making schools safe for people of every sexuality
- Meeting procedure
- Overseas teachers
- Parental leave
- Part-time teachers
- PPTA support service
- Sick leave
- Teacher competence
- Teacher conduct and discipline
- Teachers' salary guide: Area schools
- Teachers' salary guide: Secondary schools
- The staff representative on the board of trustees

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