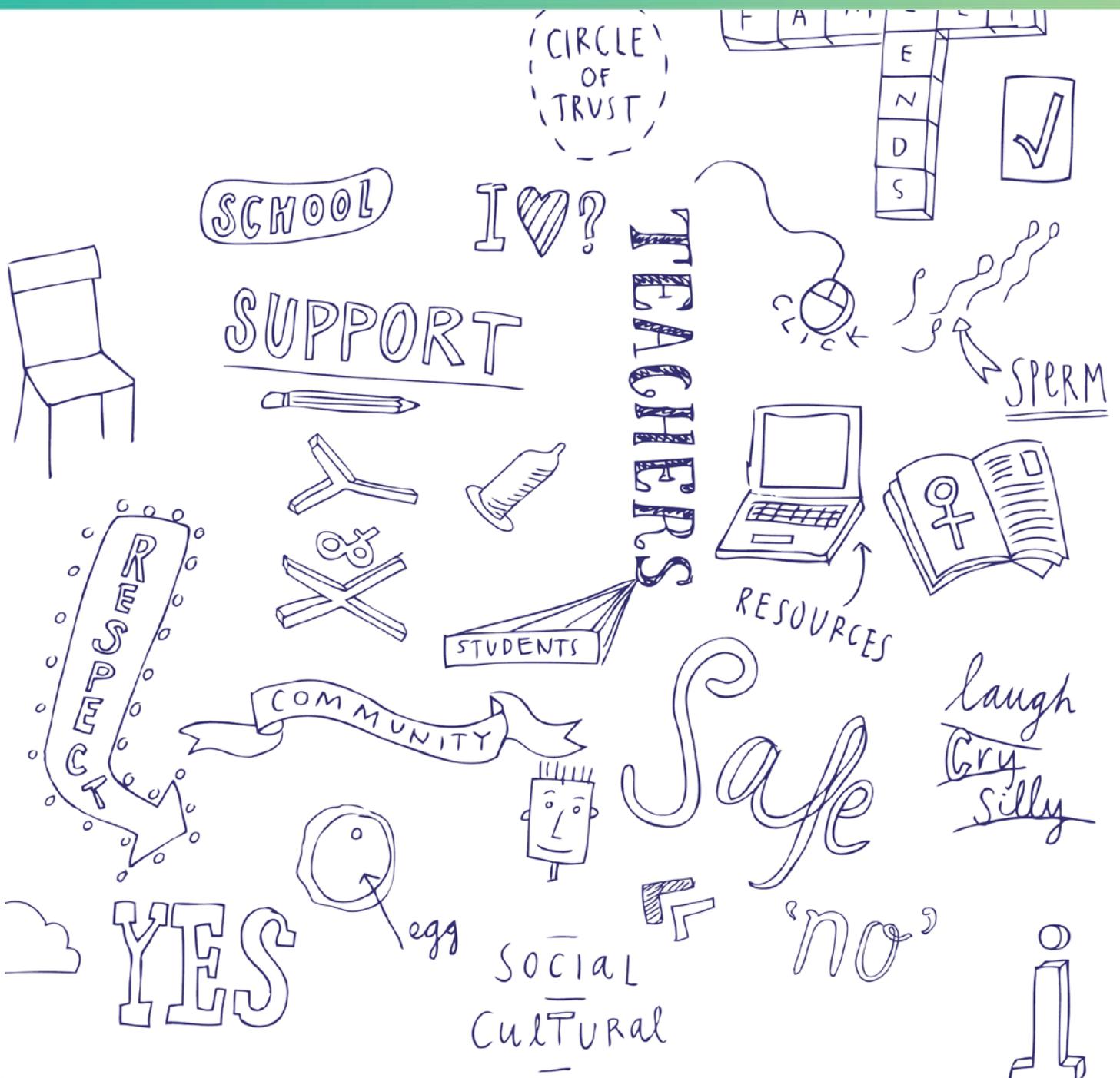


2018 Student Snapshot Report

Student feedback on relationships and sexual health education



## Foreword

In South Australian high schools the relationships and sexual health education is primarily delivered through the SHINE SA Focus Schools Program which is mapped to *Australian Curriculum: Health and Physical Education* and the *Department for Education's Keeping Safe: Child Protection Curriculum*.

The Focus Schools Program is available to all Department for Education schools in South Australia that have a secondary years (Years 8 – 10) component. In 2018, there were 130 government schools involved with the program.

SHINE SA and individual school sites sign a formal Focus School Agreement every three years. Focus Schools commit to their students participating in the annual student feedback survey. The student feedback survey is completed online via Survey Monkey or in hard copy with the data being manually entered into Survey Monkey later. In 2018, 4,279 students from 65 (50%) Focus Schools responded.

This 2018 Student Snapshot Report summarises data collected from students from Years 8 to 10 participating in the SHINE SA Focus Schools Program during 2018 and highlights possible opportunities for improved relationships and sexual health education practice. It is a snapshot of the questions from the full survey and discusses main survey findings.



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## Key findings

- 4,279 students from 65 (50%) Focus Schools submitted a survey.
- The majority of respondents were Year 8 students (41% Year 8; 35% Year 9; 22% Year 10).
- 9% of respondents were offered 1–5 relationships and sexual health (R&SH) lessons, 27% – 6–10 lessons, 38% –11–15 lessons and 26% – 16 or more lessons.
- 85% of respondents rated the safety and support of the class environment as Good or Excellent.
- 82% of respondents rated the course overall as Good or Excellent.
- 93% of respondents believed the course will be useful to them now or in the future.
- 82% of respondents believed the course was often or always respectful and inclusive of same sex attraction.
- 85% of respondents believed the course was often or always respectful and inclusive of different values and beliefs.
- 27% of respondents had spoken with their family about a program related topic as a result of the lessons they had participated in.
- Parent/carer rated highest (63%) with regard to where young people would go for further information, followed by Friend (47%), Internet (40%), Health service (36%), Teacher (32%), and School counsellor (24%).
- The 5 most useful topics indicated, in descending order, were: Relationships (44%), Safer Sex (41%), STIs (39%), All of it (36%) and Consent (33%).
- 31% indicated that no change was needed to improve the course, 17% wanted more in-depth information, 14% better class behaviour and 12% more lessons.

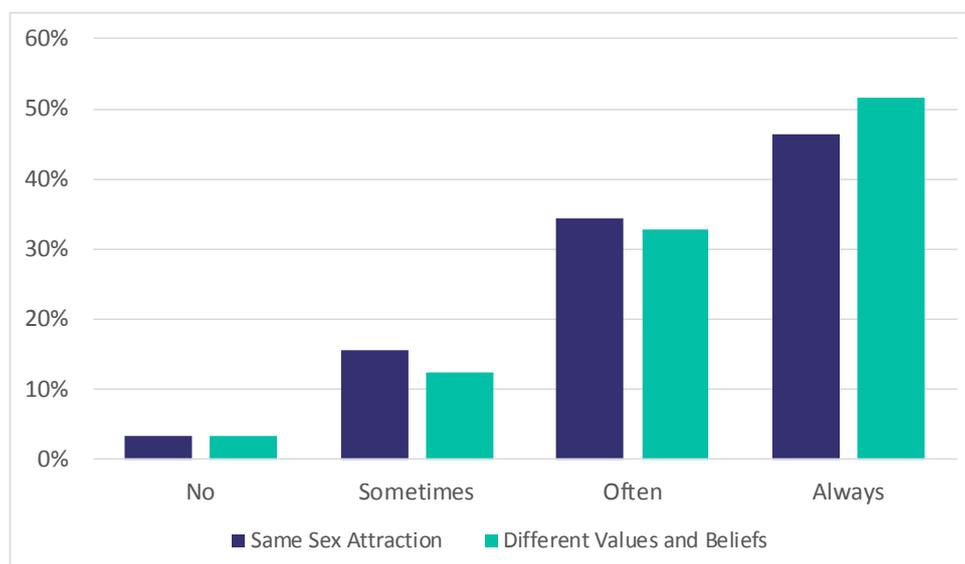
## Students' rating of the course

Figure 1: Students rating of the course and the class environment (2018)



## Was the course respectful and inclusive of same sex attraction and different values and beliefs?

Figure 2: Student views on whether the course was respectful and inclusive (2018)



Student quotes on whether the course was respectful and inclusive

*'We created a list of group norms which my classmates respected. Our teacher also made sure to tolerate no inappropriate behaviour.'*

*'The actual course was pretty good in this case. It was more so a problem of how it was communicated across on the teacher's behalf or how the class reacted if anything offensive information or words were said.'*

*'This course was respectful of different values and beliefs and in many of the videos that we watched. The course was inclusive and used many examples of people with different values and beliefs to show us and as a class, we were very respectful of that.'*

*'We students and teachers are respecting the people that bisexual or anyone that same-sex attraction.'*

*'People respect me and my beliefs and don't force other religions in to my face I'm happy and well respected by everyone around me.'*

*'Yes, I would say so. The conversations we had as a class was respectful and comforting. Though we had a good laugh at some embarrassing moments. But we kept it respectful and kept our story quiet.'*

*'There was often topics and questions referring to other beliefs.'*

*'The course let everyone have their own beliefs and values.'*

*'There was no "no! Your belief is wrong!"'*

*'We were all respectful to everyone's beliefs and culture. We didn't insult anyone's opinions and listened.'*

*'We didn't go into much detail about different religions and beliefs. It would've been interesting to learn about what different beliefs think.'*

*'Of course there are always going to be opposing views which collide with others making conversation a little bit more difficult.'*

*'I think many people are afraid to speak out if their opinion is un-popular or not what their friends think. Even though the teachers try to make a safe environment, some people aren't comfortable with the other students.'*

## Will the course be useful to you now or in the future in terms of your relationships and sexual health?

NO – 7%

*This course covers stuff we already knew and it had to avoid topics of gender and sexuality due to the school not wanting to offend anyone.*

*I picked NO because it will be useful to get in a relationship.*

*Most of the information taught, I was already pretty informed of from previous school courses and just my own general knowledge.*

*I trust my judgement and legal guardians more than a generalised class.*

YES – 93%

No

*These things contribute to my well-being and other people's well-being.*

*I believe that it's important to learn about this topic because you gain further knowledge on things including safety and how to differentiate between healthy and unhealthy relationships. Without this information, you could get hurt in society.*

*Mostly. It taught a lot about what different STIs are - the symptoms etc. It was good to learn these things especially if any symptoms come up in future within others or myself.*

Yes

*Because I would like to be in a healthy relationship.*

*It will teach me to stay safe from people and social media, and not to feel embarrassed by my body.*

*I now know where to go for help and to pick the right choices and decisions for my overall health.*

*It teaches students things and answers questions that they may be too embarrassed to ask an adult.*

*The course educates us about the risks of sexual intercourse, and how to protect ourselves against STIs/infection and unwanted pregnancy.*

*It taught me that it is important to communicate with partners and respect them.*

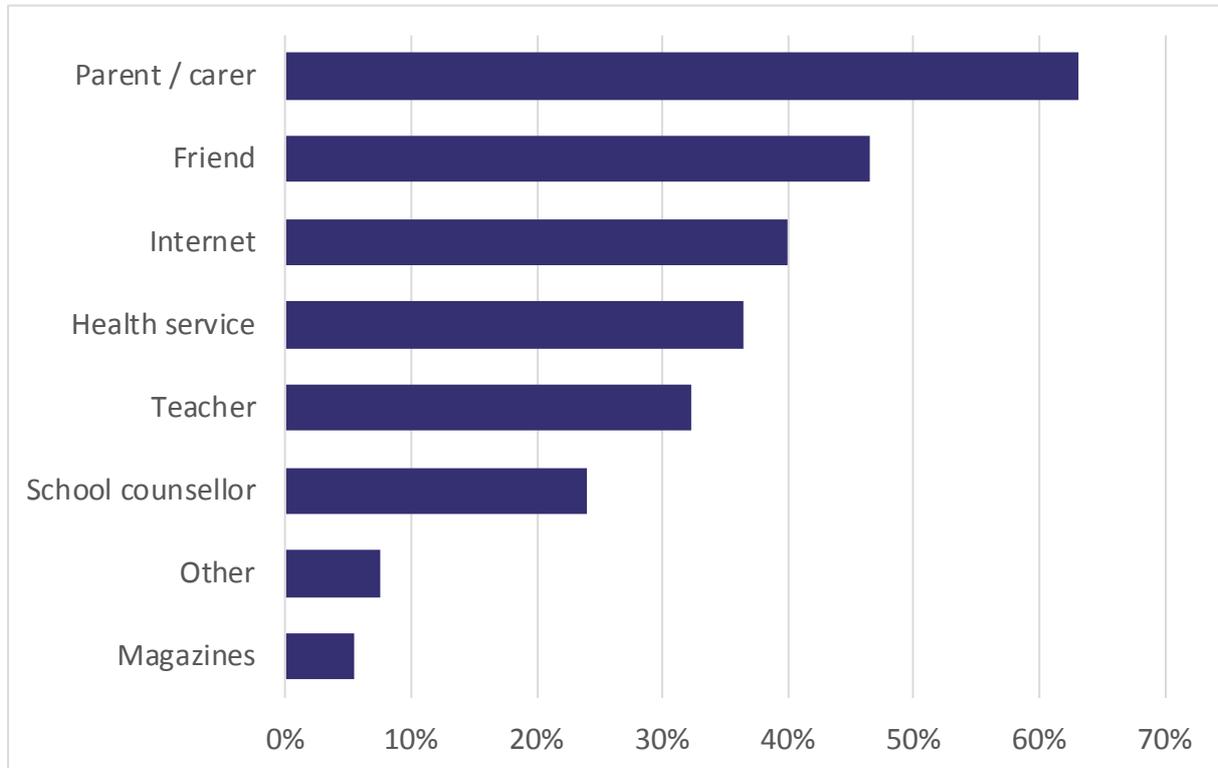
*Now I know how to ask and make sure someone is okay during sex.*

*It gives me the right tools to control the situation.*

*I think it is important that I know what role power plays in a relationship and the legalities of consent.*

## Who would you speak to/where would you go to find out more about relationships and sexual health?

Figure 3: Student views on where they would go to find out more (2018)



## Have you talked about any of the topics with your carers/family?

NO – 73%

*My family is horrible when it comes to explaining these things; that's why I was left in the dark a lot.*

*I didn't feel much of a need. I have a very open family about this.*

*I'm too embarrassed.*

*SUPER awkward!*

*I'm not comfortable talking about it to my mum because she gives lectures about it that I hear at school, my dad I'm 50/50.*

*My family does not talk about sex and puberty at home because is it counted as shameful.*

*It just hasn't come up in conversation.*

*I DONT KNOW HOW TO BRING THE TOPIC UP.*

*Because it isn't exactly dinner table conversation.*

*I'm an international student*

*I have not, because my family situation at home has become complicated.*

*They wouldn't understand.*

*My parents are too busy with work and I am rarely home when they aren't busy.*

YES – 27%

*I've talked with my mum about relationships and what were her experiences with relationships when she was younger.*

*I have talked about it to my mum and sister and they explain anything I'm confused about during class. I talk openly with them and trust them.*

*I have people in my life who are attracted to the same sex so it was a topic that came up a few times and my parents were interested in what I was learning at school so that they could support me as I get older with decisions such as when to have a sexual relationship etc.*

*I told them about all the funny stuff and we had a conversation about the serious stuff.*

*I talked about the banana penis.*

*I have talked about some things to demonstrate the amount of learning I have received.*

*Dad found it awkward but yes.*

*I always talk to my mum and clarify things I'm not 100% comfortable asking a teacher.*

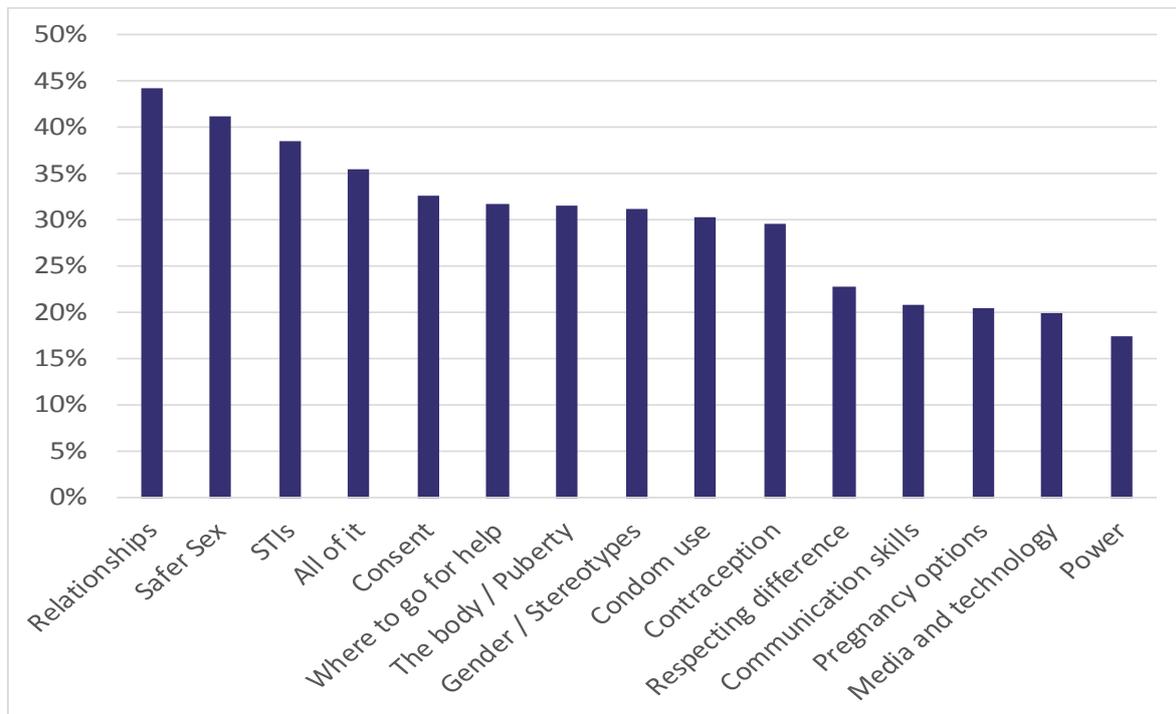
*I spoke with my mum about whether she had ever had an STI. It was good because it was something I hadn't really considered talking about before. It wasn't awkward and it was very informative, it helped because she is a nurse and had a lot of useful and important information.*

No

Yes

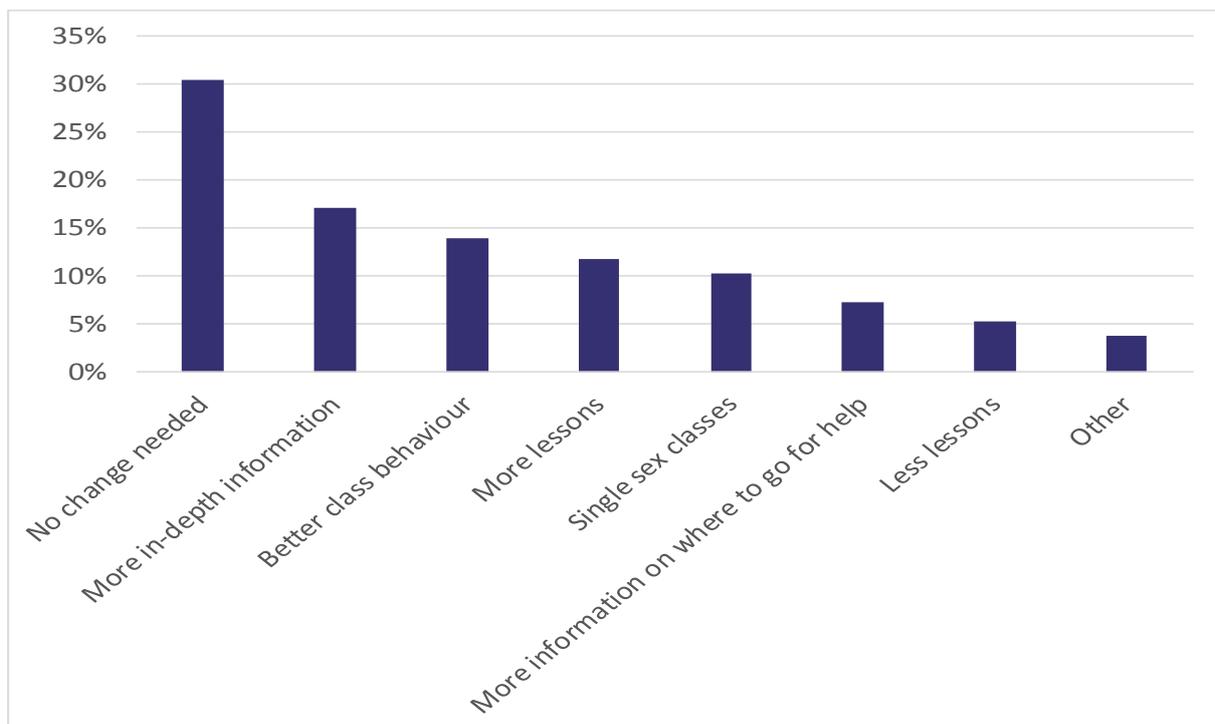
## What were the most useful topics in the course?

Figure 4: Student views on what were the most useful topics (2018)



## What changes would you make to improve the course?

Figure 5: Student suggestions for improvements (2018)



Student quotes on suggestions for improvements

*'I prefer that the class didn't joke about this subject so much.'*

*'I would be more comfortable in a same-sex class and we would be able to focus on issues that affect us only.'*

*'Learn about a specific topic for a longer amount of time.'*

*'I've had worries with sexual relations in the pass and needed this info sooner.'*

*'Better acting - get better vids that aren't so obviously fake.'*

*'Get rid of the bad people because they hold up the class by being disrespectful and racist or stereotypical.'*

*'More LGBTQIA+ friendly lessons, including at least a mention of non-binary genders and asexuality, because these can be big issues for some people. I mean, they don't need a whole lesson, just one mention would be good.'*

*'Less sexist and biased to girls (e.g. clear up women rape as well, women do bad stuff as well, not always men, gendered power).'*

*'Both guys and girls should be in the lesson, not just guys from football theory. While the class behaviour contributed greatly to the dismay of this course, the lessons were also taught by someone known to dismiss the current identities of transgender people and assume every person is a heterosexual.'*

## General feedback from students

*'You guys have come up with a really good program!'*

*'I loved the SHINE lessons. I wish they went all year round.'*

*'It was an interesting topic to cover and it was successful because it was executed in a safe environment.'*

*'This program was very respectful to everyone and every gender and I appreciate that. Thank you.'*

*'I think this course overall is good as it provides information on a variety of topics. The course was handled well by the teachers and they were knowledgeable and open-minded.'*

*'Don't let teachers over the age of 50-60 or PE teachers teach the lessons, have them retire because they are stuck in their old way.'*

*'Please re-shoot videos- they are terrible.'*

*'I would like there to be more discussion about mental health as these sorts of disorders are growing very common within today's generation.'*

*'I felt the course was pretty good, except for there was almost no mention of transgender and genderqueer problems and gender dysphoria, which I felt needed to be talked about but weren't really.'*

*'We definitely need to learn more about LGBTQ+ because, what happens if someone has these feelings towards the same sex and knows nothing about it?'*

*'Learn more about gender identities before you teach the topics. DO NOT bring intersex people into the equation they have clarified they are not a gender or sexuality but have a medical condition, they do not wish to associate with the LGBT community by nature.'*

## Discussion

In 2018, all Focus Schools were encouraged to participate in the student survey – 50% of schools responded and received a dedicated report reflecting their results. The SHINE SA Years 8–10 curriculum comprises 15 lessons in each year level. These results indicated that 36% of students had less than 10 lessons and 38% had 11 to 15. It is beyond the scope of this survey to determine which lessons/topics were omitted. In this reporting period there was a 6% increase in the number of respondents from Year 10 (now 22%).

The majority of students indicated that the classroom environment was safe, supportive and inclusive of diversity and rated the course good or excellent. These results reflect well on the skills of the teachers delivering the curriculum.

As highlighted in the results from previous years, the majority of students had not discussed R&SH topics at home with many commenting that this was not something they felt comfortable with or there was no necessity as they received all the information they needed from their school lessons. Parents/carers still continue to rate as the highest source of further information for R&SH.

Overwhelmingly 93% of students endorsed the relevance of the curriculum to their lives and one third indicated that they would not make any changes to the course. A number of students, however, indicated that they would like more in-depth information and more lessons. Comments regarding classroom behaviour and the gender make-up of the class provides interesting information for individual schools and teachers to consider.

Student's feedback also emphasised the need for teachers to provide a curriculum that is inclusive and respectful of sexual and gender diversity. Teachers need to ensure a safe and supportive environment for students and feel confident to challenge any transphobia and homophobia just as they would racism or sexism. With an increasing number of South Australian students reporting to be same sex attracted or gender diverse, it is critical that teachers continue to engage in ongoing professional development in relationships and sexual health education. Furthermore, specialised training and professional development sessions with all educators may also assist with the reduction of homophobic and transphobic bullying. Ideally, these sessions would be provided free of charge, of shorter duration and held mostly during the school holidays to enable maximal educator participation. Individualised support to schools requesting assistance with issues including how to navigate the Department for Education's policy and procedures on gender diversity, providing guidance and assistance to develop support plans for individual transgender students and strategies for supporting LGBTIQ student action groups is also critical.

Overall, the results of the 2018 student survey were positive and indicated that the SHINE SA Years 8–10 curriculum was well delivered by teachers and met the needs of young people in South Australia.