



## Our Position on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in Education

**Bloom-ED firmly supports continuing and advancing DEI initiatives in Australian education. The push to dismantle DEI in the United States is deeply alarming and has already begun affecting Australian universities and research. If this continues, it could significantly harm the implementation of relationships and sexuality education and impact student mental health.**

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) ensures that all people, particularly those from marginalised communities (including people with disability, people from culturally diverse backgrounds, women, LGBTQIA+ people, and people from rural and remote locations), have access to a fair and supportive environment. In education, DEI is foundational to fostering safe, supportive, enriching, and equitable educational environments for all students that support Sustainable Development Goal 4 of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. As the national peak body for evidence-based relationships and sexuality education (RSE), Bloom-ED is committed to student wellbeing and DEI being embedded in educational standards and delivery.

We are deeply concerned by the sweeping changes made within the United States over the previous few months that have seen DEI and related rights for marginalised communities removed from various contexts, including research, online and public discourse. After witnessing the rapid removal of essential information and content from policy and platforms (such as LGBTQ+ health content being removed from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website), Bloom-ED feel there are considerations to be made on how this might impact the Australian landscape.

A commitment to DEI ensures that **all students**—regardless of their cultural background, gender identity, sexuality, disability, or socioeconomic status—feel **valued, respected, and included** within their school communities. These positive feelings allow students to experience better academic outcomes, stronger social connections, and improved mental health. On the contrary, students who do not feel included or seen within the school environment or curriculum often experience heightened rates of distress and poorer mental health outcomes. DEI in education should not be viewed as a moral imperative, but an evidence-based approach to supporting the holistic development of young people.

## The Impact on RSE and Student Mental Health

Evidence shows that RSE can enhance young people's knowledge and skills to engage in healthy and safe friendships and relationships, understand consent, and navigate sexual health and wellbeing. Without DEI principles guiding RSE, there are inherent risks to the accessibility, relevance, and effectiveness of this education for young people.

The removal of DEI frameworks in RSE and broader educational contexts would risk the:

- exclusion of LGBTQIA+ perspectives in RSE, leaving students without critical information that supports their identity and wellbeing
- failure to address the needs of students with disability and those from different cultural backgrounds, particularly in relation to autonomy, consent, and safety
- rollback of trauma-informed approaches that ensure RSE is safe and accessible for students with lived experiences of violence or marginalisation
- potential increases in gender-based violence by ignoring and not including essential content on how harmful masculinities and rigid gender norms perpetuate violence
- increased rates of bullying, discrimination, and social exclusion for students from diverse backgrounds
- greater barriers to accessing mental health support due to stigma and lack of culturally responsive services and
- the weakening of school-wide strategies that promote student wellbeing and prevent psychological distress.

## The Role of Schools in Upholding DEI in RSE

Schools have a duty of care to ensure that all students are provided with RSE that upholds their rights, dignity, and wellbeing. This includes:

- Including DEI principles into school policies, curricula, and teacher training.
- Providing appropriate RSE professional learning opportunities for educators on inclusive practices and trauma-informed approaches.
- Consulting with diverse communities, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, LGBTQIA+ students, and people with disability, to ensure that RSE programs are reflective of their needs and experiences.

The continuation of DEI in education, including RSE, is critical to ensuring that all students have the opportunity to thrive. Bloom-ED asserts that any movement to dismantle DEI threatens the integrity of inclusive education, the effectiveness of RSE, and the mental health of young people. We call on policymakers, educators, and community leaders to uphold DEI as a core principle of Australian education, safeguarding the wellbeing and future of all students.



## References we drew upon to shape our position statement:

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- United Nations. (2023). *Goals 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all*. Department of Economic and Social Affairs. <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal4>

### World Association for Sexual Health:

- Declaration on sexual rights
- Declaration forging the future of improved sexual health for all
- Declaration on sexual pleasure
- Declaration on sexual justice
- Statement on Comprehensive Sexuality Education.

### UNESCO:

- International technical guidance on sexuality education: an evidence-informed approach

