Guidelines for supporting sexual and gender diversity in schools released

The 29 of August is ‘Wear it Purple Day.’ This year the student led organisation is focusing on identifying stereotypes and preconceptions to educate about sexuality and gender diversity. Allanah Lucas Commissioner for Equal Opportunity said she was proud to release the Guidelines Supporting Sexual and Gender Diversity in Schools on this special day.

Ms Lucas said, “The Guidelines have been developed in line with the National Safe Schools Framework to support schools in their valued work in providing positive learning environments that are inclusive of diversity and safe from discrimination, bullying and harassment based on sexual orientation, gender identity and intersex difference.”

Ms Lucas commended the positive steps schools are currently taking and stated, “The Guidelines are here to encourage good practice and provide information and resources to schools and their communities.

“Many do not realise the harm and suffering that such bullying can cause.”

Ms Lucas stated, “The Guidelines had been developed with extensive consultation with public and private education sectors and related agencies in WA, together with the use of recent national research.”

Research reveals that same sex attracted and gender questioning students between 14 -21 are actually experiencing more abuse at school than in previous years: 61% reported verbal homophobic abuse, 18% reported physical homophobic abuse and 69% reported other forms. Overall, 80% experienced the abuse at school (up from 69% a decade ago).

Schools that have policies prohibiting homophobic discrimination and bullying in Tasmania and Victoria show a significant reduction in prejudice and reduced levels of bullying across the entire school community.

Ms Lucas said Australia has laws that underpin the respect, fairness and safety expected in school environments. The Commission can provide information, links to resources and training. The Guidelines are available on the Commission’s website at www.eoc.wa.gov.au.

Quotes from Community Leaders
Support for implementation of the Guidelines has come from a broad range of people and organisation including:

Narelda Jacobs Presenter Channel Ten
“These guidelines build on the great work already being done in WA schools to support sexual and gender diversity, because our children need to know they’re safe from discrimination, bullying or harassment.”

Kylie Catto President WA Council of State School Organisations Inc. (WACSSO)
“The Guidelines are a positive and timely step forward in improving equality in schools.

“Every student should go to school feeling safe and confident that their individual circumstances will be respected.

“WACSSO is proud to have been part of the development of these Guidelines, which, using best practice will encourage schools to provide support, resources and strategies for LGBTI young people and their friends, siblings and parents.”
“We know many schools are already doing a great job in this area and the Guidelines will help them to build upon the positive steps taken to ensure all schools are a safe and inclusive place for the whole school community.”

**Geoffrey Bice** Uniting Church
“The Uniting Church is fully committed to human rights having promised at our inception to "oppose all forms of discrimination which infringe basic human rights and freedoms." The Social Justice Board of the Uniting Church in Western Australia believes that providing GLBTI young people with a safe school environment is a vital element in that work and is proud to endorse the Equal Opportunity Commission’s GLBTI School Guidelines.”

**Dani Wright Toussaint** Freedom Centre Coordinator:
“These Guidelines will provide the crucial foundation for WA schools to equitably provide a safe school environment for the 17%* of students that are LGBTIQ.”

**Pat Byrne** President of the State School Teachers’ Union of WA
“The SSTUWA is proud to have been involved in the development of the Guidelines for Supporting Sexual and Gender Diversity in Schools. This is an important progression in supporting and celebrating sexuality and gender diversity within our school communities and in doing so prevent sexuality discrimination and homophobic bullying. Our schools should be a safe and affirming environment for LGBTI students, staff, parents and families.”

You are welcome to contact:

- Living Proud For media comment contact Dani Wright Toussaint 9228 0354 or 9482 0000 (or media enquiries to Bella on 9486 9855)
- Relationships Australia: Media Coordinator Sharon Greenock 0438 937 486 Sharon.greenock@wa.relationships.com.au
- WACSSO All media inquires to Lyndsey Wetton communications@wacsso.wa.edu.au
- Youth Affairs Council WA Craig Comrie, Chairperson 9227 5440 yacwa@yacwa.org.au
- State School Teachers’ Union of W.A. Inc. T 08 9210 6000 | Pat Byrne President@sstuwa.org.au, or Lincoln Rose (Sen. Vice President) in 3rd instance, Samantha Schofield (Junior Vice President) VicePresident@sstuwa.org.au
- Freedom Centre Danni Wright Toussaint Coordinator 0419945219 info@freedom.org.au

**FOR ADDITIONAL COMMENT:** Public Affairs Officer, Colleen Mack
(08) 9216 3911 mob 0437 213 837
Level 2, 141 St Georges Terrace, Western Australia 6000
Tel: (08) 9216 3900 – Fax: (08) 9216 3960
Email: eoc@eoc.wa.gov.au Website www.eoc.wa.gov.au