Article: Why The Safe Schools Coalition Is So Important
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Instructions: Read the article attached thoroughly and carefully and answer the following questions. Please keep this article in your PDS workbook and write the answers in your PDS workbook in neat writing.

Firstly, what is The Safe Schools Coalition?
“Safe Schools Coalition Australia
The Safe Schools Coalition Australia (SSCA) is the first national program funded by the Australian Government aimed at creating safe and supportive school environments for same sex attracted, intersex and gender diverse people by reducing homophobic and transphobic bullying and discrimination in schools.
The coalition consists of young people, teachers, principals, schools, service delivery partners, youth organisations, parents and governments who want to create a positive culture of diversity and inclusivity and create change in their community.

The Foundation for Young Australians has developed the SSCA and works with state and territory education providers and service delivery partners to implement the program. Schools, teachers, young people and their families have access to resources, training and support to help challenge discrimination and create safer and more inclusive educational environments.

The SSCA aligns with the National Safe Schools Framework which assists Australian schools to develop safe, supportive and respectful teaching and learning communities that promote student wellbeing.”

Article:
The school LGBTI program, the Safe Schools Coalition, has become such a political football in recent weeks, as politicians and lobby groups on both sides of the fence aim to score cheap points through their support or opposition to the framework, that it has almost become easy to overlook what is actually at stake here.

Let us remind you.
LGBTI people are between three and fourteen times more likely to commit suicide than heterosexual Australians. One in six young LGBTI people have attempted suicide. One in three have self harmed.

Among teenage boys, 40 percent wouldn't want a same-sex attracted person as a friend, sixty percent had witnessed first-hand someone being bullied for their sexuality, and a quarter believe calling someone a "homo" or "dyke" is OK. Up to 80 percent of LGBTI teens have experienced homophobic language at schools and one quarter had experienced physical abuse at school, according to some studies.

One in five lesbian, gay or bisexual Australians are currently experiencing depression, more than triple the national rate, while one in three experience an anxiety condition. These are statistics collected and collated by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, depression organisation beyondblue, Suicide Prevention Australia and various reputable universities across the country.

This is what the Safe Schools Coalition program looks to address and mitigate, through educating young people at schools about LGBTI issues, promoting tolerance and understanding, and giving resources for young LGBTI people to find help and counselling if needed. If you need a first-hand account, check out this moving, emotional recount by journalist Shannon Molloy on The Daily Telegraph.

"We know about 10 percent of young people are same-sex attracted or are experiencing gender identity issues. This is not a small number," Georgie Harman, CEO of beyondblue, told The Huffington Post Australia.

"LGBTI Australians are far more likely to be psychologically distressed, and it gets worse the younger they are."

With attacks on the Safe Schools Coalition lighting up the media in recent weeks -- just last night, a government MP likened the program to sexual predators grooming a victim -- Harman said young LGBTI people would bear a mental and emotional cost.

"If you're a young person struggling with identity or sexuality, and you're being constantly exposed to homophobic comments on the news or social media, all that does is compound those feelings of difference, that they won't be accepted, that there's something wrong with them. Those are factors that lead to self harm and suicide," she said.

Rebecca Reynolds, executive director of peak body National LGBTI Health Alliance, said comments from politicians and lobby groups just worked to further marginalise young LGBTI people. LGBTI Health also manages Qlife, a national phone counselling and assistance service.
"In a few weeks we would have better data on this, but anecdotally, children and young people are saying to services that they feel forced to be someone they're not," she told HuffPost Australia.

"These comments are in the mainstream, it is being discussed in schools and at home. We know that when there is hostility in media to LGBTI people, they take a step back on their journey. We absolutely see this as having an impact."

Reynolds said impacts and effects of bullying and homophobia in schools and in the media were not always as obvious and awful as suicide and self-harm; that such effects can manifest in eating disorders, drug and alcohol abuse, and depression. She said she supported the Safe Schools Coalition as a key part of addressing such issues at an early age.

"It's about making school environments as accepting for all young people as possible, so it stops pointing out differences and lets [young LGBTI people] feel included. Safe Schools has such a long list of programs and ideas that can be picked up depending on regional areas and differences," Reynolds said.

"That is why it is so important for this program to be operating around Australia, so schools can ask for help, and have programs tailored to them."

The Turnbull government has commissioned a review into the Coalition. Announced on Friday, the review -- to be undertaken by University of Western Australia academics Professor Bill Louden and Professor Donna Cross, will report back as to whether Safe Schools is:

- consistent with the intent and objectives of the program
- a suitable and robust resource for school teachers and students
- age appropriate
- educationally sound
- aligned to the Australian curriculum

A report will be submitted to the Department of Education and Training by March 11.

If you need help in a crisis, call Lifeline on 13 11 14. For further information about depression contact beyondBlue on 1300224636 or talk to your GP, local health professional or someone you trust.
Questions:
1. Write down any words you do not know the meaning of.
2. What does ‘anecdotally’ mean? If you aren’t sure, look it up.
3. What does LGBIT stand for? If you are not sure, look it up.
4. Who is the director of the National LGBTI Health Alliance?
5. How many young Australians are currently experiencing depression?
6. In your own words summarise the article. List at least 3 points.
7. Do you feel safe at this school? If so, what makes you feel safe? If not, what makes you feel unsafe? List at least 2 points.
8. Do you think this school is a Safe School? Why so? Or why not? List at least 3 points and justify your answer using examples. You can think of real examples where you have felt safe or unsafe.
9. Put yourself in someone else’s shoes. How do you think using homophobic language at school makes others feel?
10. List the pros and cons of implementing the Safe Schools program across Australia. List at least 3 points for each side.