



## Rapid Response

**Drafter:** 9(2)(a)

**Metis Number:** 1320000

**Date:** 7 December 2023

### Request

Your office has requested some factual bullets around the background of RSE and Aotearoa New Zealand's histories.

### Ministry Response

#### *Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE)*

- Relationships and sexuality education (RSE) is one of the seven key areas of learning within the health and physical education learning area of the New Zealand Curriculum (2007).
- Schools and kura have the flexibility to design their local curriculum, including their RSE curriculum. This means that while RSE is guided by the national curriculum, it will differ from school to school and there are no compulsory topics that must be addressed.

#### *What are the expectations on schools to deliver RSE?*

- Schools are required under the Education and Training Act 2020 to consult with their community on their planned health education programme. Schools are encouraged to communicate with whānau about when RSE is planned to take place, and the broad nature of what will be included in the lessons. There is no requirement as to what this consultation process looks like for a school, however the Ministry provides guidance in *Relationships and Sexuality Education: a guide for teachers, leaders and boards of trustees*.
- The Education and Training Act 2020 also allows parents to withdraw their young person from all or any part of sexuality education by written request.

#### *When it was developed*

- *Relationships and Sexuality Education: a guide for teachers, leaders and boards of trustees* was last refreshed in 2020. The original guidance was released in 2002 and was previously refreshed in 2015.

#### *How is was developed and who was consulted*

- The Ministry of Education contracted the University of Auckland to refresh the guidelines. The writers included:
  - Dr Katie Fitzpatrick (University of Auckland)



- Dr John Fenaughty (University of Auckland)
  - Dr Alison Green (Te Whāriki Takapou)
  - Dr Ruth Lemon (University of Auckland)
  - Dr Darren Powell (university of Auckland)
  - Dr Joeliee Seed-Piha,a (Te Whāriki Takapou)
  - Dr Analosa Veukiso-Ulugia
- The writers' group used an international advisory group made up of professors from Australian universities. The consultation and document review was conducted with a range of stakeholders including Family Planning, the New Zealand School Trustees Association, Intersex NZ, Rainbow Youth, InsideOut, the Human Rights Commission, the Chief Censor, the New Zealand Health Education Association, the Ministry of Health, the National Centre for Religious Studies, and Rape Prevention Education.
  - The content was tested with a range of teachers and young people for feedback including the 2019 Youth Advisory Group.

*How was age appropriateness considered in developing?*

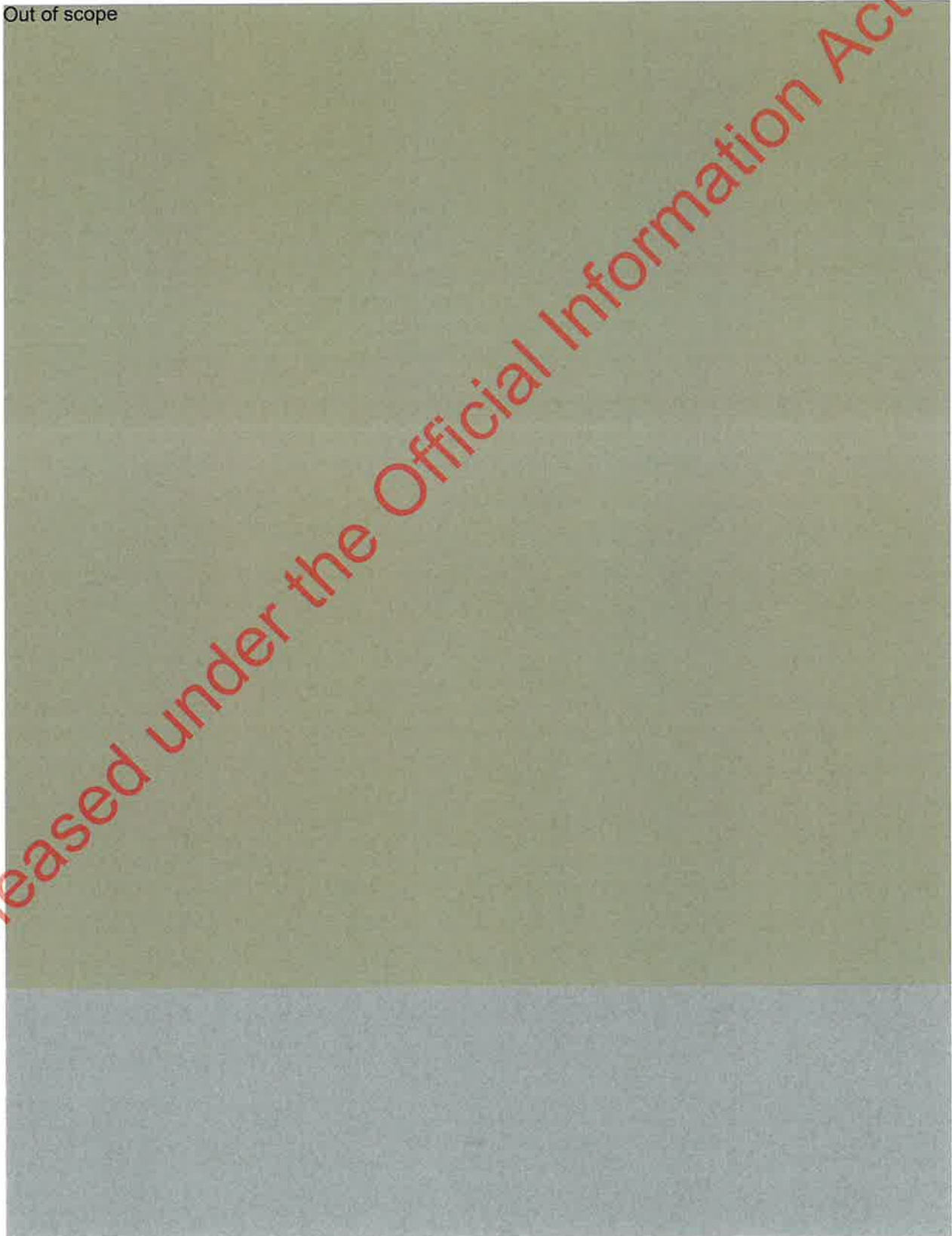
- The development, consultation and testing process produced two documents: one for Years 1-8 and one for Years 9-13. The decision to produce a document each for primary and secondary was to ensure age-appropriate learning.
- At primary level, young people receive scaffolded learning about concepts around sharing, consent, privacy, their identity and acceptance of difference in other people. This change included using the word 'relationships' in the title to signal that this learning is not solely around sex or sexuality, and is a much broader in terms of navigating growing up.
- The 2020 refresh responded to a 2018 report from the Education Review Office (ERO) entitled *Promoting wellbeing through sexuality education*. This report evaluated RSE in 116 schools and found that schools would benefit from more support for the teaching and learning of RSE. ERO found that, overall, curriculum coverage was inconsistent, with more depth needed for aspects like consent, digital technologies and relationships, and that some schools were not meeting minimum standards of compliance with current requirements.
- The guidance was also refreshed in order to further reflect what young people and their families were telling the Ministry they wanted their RSE to include. For example, feedback in 2018 found that teachers, young people and their families wanted schools to take action to be more inclusive, and to support students to recognise the importance of diversity and respect in relationships.
- The health and physical education learning area is due to be refreshed in 2024 as part of the wider refresh of the New Zealand Curriculum. We expect that any existing curriculum resources, including the guidance, will need to be updated at this time in order to align to the refreshed curriculum.
- The Ministry has received a range of correspondence from teachers in the sector acknowledging how important the guidance and tools have been to improve their practice. This feedback has come through our Curriculum Lead workforce, correspondence, the media, and social media.

### *General challenges*

- While RSE has been contentious throughout its history in the curriculum, the Ministry has seen an intensification and proliferation of misinformation and disinformation relating to RSE and the Ministry's guidance over the last year. The Ministry is aware of several cases of doctored images which use Ministry logos and colours that have been widely shared on social media. Many of these contain information that is factually inaccurate and designed to provoke anger or disapproval.

### *Aotearoa New Zealand's histories in the curriculum*

Out of scope



Released under the Official Information Act 1982

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