

Four Corners – Specific Questions & Answers

1. What is Tangara’s position on the HPV vaccine? Does Tangara still give messages to parents and students that it will be unnecessary for students because they won’t have more than one sexual partner?

A: Like all schools, the PARED schools follow the whole of the NSW Government’s curriculum including parts regarding consent and sexual health. As a matter of common sense, PARED schools do not advise or encourage students to make healthcare decisions contrary to the accepted medical advice given to students throughout Australia.

Prior to 2020, when the HPV vaccine was relatively new, and in response to many queries from concerned parents, Tangara issued some letters to parents with some reference material on the HPV vaccination program. Letters such as these were not sent after that period.

2. Is Pared aware of teachers, including some currently employed by Pared, who have attempted to recruit students to Opus Dei?

A: Pared teachers do not recruit students to Opus Dei. Like all faith-based schools around the world, our schools try to present to students the beauty of Christian life primarily through personal example whilst living an ordinary life, and leaves students completely free to choose whatever path they wish to follow. Our students are supported in whatever faith they follow or if they choose not to live with a faith. Pared teachers have the utmost respect for every person’s individual freedom and Pared does not condone or encourage any type of “recruitment” at its schools.

3. Does Pared condone recruitment of teenagers at its schools or at after-school study centres (as promoted by the schools in official newsletters), with the goal of recruiting the students to become members of Opus Dei?

A: The PARED schools and the after-school study centres of Opus Dei are independent of each other. The schools have at times advertised upcoming events at these study centres along with numerous other events and activities conducted by other local community and sporting organisations. As noted in No 2 above, the schools do not encourage or condone any of the type of “recruitment”.

4. Does Pared inform parents that mentors assigned to students are Opus Dei numeraries or supernumeraries?

A: PARED Schools do not require its teachers and other members of staff to disclose aspects of their personal life, including their religious beliefs. Each person is free in conscience, religion and thought. Accordingly, the Pared schools (like any employer) would never ask its staff if they are members of Opus Dei (or any other faith-based body) and even if it becomes known, there are no reasons for the school to keep any records of this as these are personal, private matters for each individual staff member. Therefore, no records concerning Opus Dei members are kept by PARED schools. The relationship between parents and mentors is open and trusting, and they work together in the best interests of the students.

5. What proportion of current mentors at Pared schools are numeraries or supernumeraries?

A: Kindly refer to No.4 above.

6. Will your schools be teaching sex consent training, as per the mandated new sections of the curriculum? Do the schools support consent training for students?

A: The PARED schools abide by all aspects of the NSW Government's curriculum on sex education and health and will be teaching sex consent training in accordance with the NSW Government's curriculum. Every independent school in NSW undergoes a process for renewing the school's Registration and Accreditation at least every 5 years. This includes an audit of the school's delivery of the NSW curriculum across all Key Learning Areas (KLA's) and the relevant policy documents, including the school's Safeguarding policies and procedures. All the Pared schools have undergone the inspection process within the last 3 years and have been found to be compliant in all aspects of curriculum delivery.

In March 2021, the heads of the Association for Independent Schools NSW (of which all of the Pared schools are members), Catholic Schools NSW and the NSW Department of Education signed a [Statement of Intent](#) outlining the role of schools in strengthening students' understanding of consent and preventing sexual violence among young people. The PARED Schools are supportive of this Statement and believe this is an important area of student safety and wellbeing. Consent Education was recently introduced by the Department of Education in 2022.

PARED supports the need for consent education as essential to ensuring young people are not pressured into sexual situations they would otherwise not wish to engage in. We therefore support the consent education training introduced by the Department of Education in 2022.

The PARED schools have always worked in close partnership with our parents in the important responsibility of nurturing and encouraging our students to become the best versions of themselves. At the heart of their mission is the fostering of an understanding for the value of all people, including a deep respect for women. Under this framework, any anti-social attitudes would be immediately picked up and reported by our parents and staff during their many interactions.

7. What is Pared's response to a current Redfield senior teacher, Martin Fitzgerald, stating online in 2021 that he didn't believe in consent training for boys?

A: Mr Martin Fitzgerald wrote a polemic article in an independent publication which, whilst not necessarily representing the views of Redfield College, was attempting to highlight additional measures to address a current serious social issue which, in his view, was well highlighted by Chantel Contos. Mr Fitzgerald is not a teacher of sexual consent training or any subject in relation to the broader NSW PDHPE curriculum. He teaches English, Religion and Philosophy .

8. What is Pared's response to the following statement by the same teacher writing the following in response to the Harvey Weinstein scandal in 2017? *"Sex is too powerful an urge to be "negotiated". The very notion of rational consent to powerful passions, especially when alcohol is involved, is absurd... Who was the bright spark who came up with the laughable proposal that men ask consent of women "every step of the way"? It is absurd to expect men to stop mid-stream and ask permission for the next move."*

A: Please refer to No.7 above .

9. What is Pared's response to allegations that Tangara has taught misinformation, namely:
- that consumption of pornography results in 'holes in the brain'.
 - showing girls videos that depict inaccurate portrayals of abortions including dismembering a foetus limb-for-limb?
 - -redacting and removing pages of textbooks containing curriculum sex education information.

A: These two topics were taught to Year 9 girls in the context of Respect for Love and Life. Parents were informed before these topics were discussed, and if any student was not comfortable discussing these topics she was able to opt out and go to the Library instead.

Tangara has not taught misinformation. Internet and pornography addiction has been researched and discussed widely in the field of human neuroscience and in academic institutions and journals as well as the media.

With regards to abortion, students were informed that there are different methods that can be used to perform an abortion. Students were shown a cartoon-video of a surgical abortion, which does involve "pulling out the foetal parts with forceps," often starting with the limbs: <https://pregnancylansing.com/abortion/methods/>.

Prior to 2017 some redacting of material may have occurred. During 2017 an internal review of the PDHPE syllabus was conducted and the school program was adjusted to meet the requirements of the current PDHPE syllabus. Policies that were adopted in 2017 ensure that no material from any textbooks are redacted.

If the ABC has information regarding recent activity of this sort, we would welcome the details so they can be appropriately investigated and dealt with in accordance with our policies and NESAs requirements regarding such matters.

10. Multiple Tangara past pupils and their parents have told us how the schools actively discouraged girls in their care from getting the HPV vaccine. Why?

A: This might have been a misunderstanding of the school's communication about the vaccine prior to 2018, when the vaccine was still relatively new, and a number of parents were asking questions about it. Tangara was attempting to ensure parents were fully informed about the vaccine and its potential risks by sharing medical and other information from the media with them. As noted in Question No. 1 above, PARED abides by the NSW Government's curriculum regarding consent and sexual health. PARED Schools do not advise or encourage students to make healthcare decisions contrary to the accepted medical advice given to students throughout Australia.

11. What is Pared's position on the HPV vaccine?

A: As noted in Questions No. 1 and 10 above, PARED abides by the NSW Government's curriculum regarding consent and sexual health. PARED Schools do not advise or encourage students to make healthcare decisions contrary to the accepted medical advice given to students throughout Australia. The perspective of the Catholic Church is that the use of the HPV vaccine is morally acceptable.

- 12.** What was the result of the investigation undertaken by Pared into a former Tangara teacher who recruited a student to Opus Dei at the age of 16 and then commenced a physical relationship with her when she entered the Eremeran study centre at the age of 18?

A: When necessary, the schools engage an independent external investigator to investigate allegations of inappropriate conduct of staff. Despite there being no complaint or allegation raised by anyone to Tangara, the school decided to look into the matter thoroughly after becoming aware of the allegation referred to. Tangara engaged an external independent investigator (a former federal police officer) and, as per usual practice, the teacher was stood down pending the investigation. The investigation found no evidence of any inappropriate or Reportable Conduct relevant to the teacher's role.

The Pared schools actively comply with the NSW Government's mandatory reporting rules regarding issues of teacher and staff misconduct, grooming and child abuse. An external investigation firm has been engaged by the PARED schools for a number of years to conduct investigations, ensure compliance and assist in the development and strengthening of our child protection practices. At the start of 2022, this relationship was strengthened by the Pared schools requesting the firm to provide an experienced professional investigator to fulfil a role as a professional, external Safeguarding Officer for all of the Pared schools (a measure that goes beyond what is done in most schools in Australia). The Safeguarding Officer, who is an experienced and industry-recognised professional investigator supports the Pared schools with complex matters, reviews all misconduct investigations, and provides capacity building expertise and advice to all Pared school Principals and Headmasters. All investigations are either reviewed, or conducted by, the Safeguarding Officer and comply with the national best practice standards and those of the NSW Office of the Children's Guardian. The Safeguarding Officer provides regular reports of their work and ongoing reviews of systems to the CEO and Board of Pared.

If the ABC is aware of specific allegations of misconduct, grooming and child abuse that should have been acted upon but were not, we request that the matter(s) be brought to the attention of the NSW Police to ensure a thorough investigation by the authorities might be undertaken.

- 13.** Were any mandatory reports given to relevant authorities because of this conduct?

A: For privacy reasons, we are not able to answer this question but please refer to our comments below.

- 14.** The teacher left the school and went overseas in 2019 – was she dismissed by Tangara?

A: There was no evidence of inappropriate conduct or Reportable Conduct on behalf of the teacher. The teacher chose to resign at the commencement of the 2020 school year. For privacy reasons we cannot provide further details.

- 15.** What is Pared's response to numerous alumni from Tangara and Redfield saying that the schools were homophobic and that the messaging on LGBTIQ+ issues left them psychologically scarred?

A: The health, safety and welfare of children in our care is the highest priority of PARED Schools. No children are victimised because of their sexual orientation or identification. PARED Schools operate in accordance with the teachings of the Catholic Church that demand that we do not judge others, something that has been a constant theme of Pope Francis throughout his papacy.

If any staff member or student over the 40-year history of the Pared schools have made inappropriate comments it certainly does not represent the policy of our schools.

Like all schools with students who identify as LGBTIQ, we have put in place strict policies and procedures to deal with victimisation or bullying by teachers or other staff of the schools in accordance with NSW and Commonwealth Government anti-discrimination legislation. All students at our schools are treated equally and provided the same opportunities and level of care. We also work closely with families of students who identify as LGBTIQ to provide additional support as needed.

If the ABC has information concerning specific allegations of misconduct by teachers or other staff of the PARED schools, we would welcome the details so they can be appropriately investigated and dealt with in accordance with our policies and procedures, as well as NSW and Commonwealth Government requirements regarding such matters.

- 16.** Do Pared schools teach that suicide will send a person to hell, and what is the approach taken when a student or former student suicides?

A: We share the general and widespread concern over the prevalence of suicide in society and have particular concern for the wellbeing of students in our schools who may be at risk. We never teach that suicide will send a person to hell. Instead, when someone within our broader school community has died by suicide, we offer that person's family and friends all the support (psychological, spiritual, physical) that we can provide.

- 17.** Why do Pared schools teach teenagers that masturbation is disordered behaviour?

A: The Pared schools have always adhered to the teachings of the Catholic Church. That statement is not an accurate and complete description of the teachings of the Catholic Church, which takes into consideration both theological and psychological influences on that area.

- 18.** Does Pared condone teachers discussing self-mortification practices such as use of the discipline or cilice with students?

A: Self-mortification has been a practice of Christianity since its very beginning, and includes such things as abstinence and fasting during Lent. The Catholic Church does not prescribe specific practices, and PARED schools do not promote specific practices other than fasting and abstinence during Lent. We do encourage students to undertake acts of charity for others as the best form of self-denial. They are encouraged to do this by participating in community service initiatives.

- 19.** What is Pared's response to a teacher bringing a discipline into class and condoning its use?

A: PARED and Tangara were not aware of this allegation until it was raised by the ABC today. The ABC made direct contact with one of our teachers asking this same question. That teacher has informed Tangara that this has never occurred. The school has never received complaints or notifications of such occurrences in the past which we would expect to have received if such a thing had occurred.

20. We have seen a video filmed by the same teacher at Tangara of year 8 students which was intended to be presented to their future year 12 selves. In the video, the girls speak about their virginity as a diamond and warn themselves not to become sluts. The teacher can be heard laughing and encouraging the girls. Do you think her encouragement meets community expectations?

A: PARED and Tangara were not aware of this allegation until it was raised today by the ABC. We have asked the teacher concerned about this matter. The teacher said she asks her Year 8 students in Religion each year to write a letter to their year 12 self in which they write the life lessons they have learnt in Year 8 and things they would like to tell their Year 12 self. These students seal their letters to themselves in an envelope and the teacher never reads them. They are given to the students upon graduation in Year 12. The teacher has advised us that she does not recall ever making a video of the activity. Further PARED and Tangara have never received complaints from parents of such an incident, which we would expect to receive if such a thing had occurred. If there had been a complaint it would have been investigated.

If the ABC has evidence of this allegation, we would welcome the details so it can be appropriately investigated and dealt with in accordance with our policies and procedures, as well as NSW and Commonwealth Government requirements regarding such matters.