

Subject: Youth Empowerment Against HIV/AIDS (YEAH)

Date: Sunday, 24 April 2016 at 2:17:16 PM Australian Eastern Standard Time

From: Anne-Frances Watson

To: Minister.Ley@health.gov.au

Dear Minister,

I am writing in relation to the recent announcement that the Federal Government will be defunding Youth Empowerment Against HIV/AIDS (YEAH). It is my strong recommendation that this decision be reversed.

I have conducted research into sexuality education and adolescent sexuality – where I examined what young people are learning, and where they are getting that information from. This research took place as a response to the alarmingly high levels of positive notifications of STIs in young people. I conducted focus groups with young people aged 14-16, and I reviewed a large body of literature from across the fields of health, education, and cultural studies. That research painted a worrying picture that showed that young people are not receiving adequate information about sexual health and safe sex, and the majority of information that they do receive is not engaging and they therefore do not feel that it has any relevance to them.

Since 2009 YEAH has been filling a gaping void in sexual health education for many young people, and they have been able to achieve exceptional outcomes on a shoestring budget. I believe that in 2015 alone they have been able to reach 900,000 young people online and 10,000 young people in person. YEAH's core programs and activities are advancing the 8 key strategic components of the Federal Government's national STI strategy. Research has shown that when it comes to sex education, young people prefer to engage and learn from peers who are closer in age to themselves – and considering that YEAH is Australia's only youth-lead and youth-focused program, defunding this organisation will cause that gaping void in sexual health education to grow ever larger.

I urge you to accept a meeting with representatives and volunteers from YEAH so that you can see how deeply passionate and intelligent they are about what they do. I would very much like to discuss this decision with you, and would hope that you would reconsider the position of the Federal Government on this matter.

I look forward to your response on this urgent matter.

Yours Sincerely,

Dr Anne-Frances Watson (AFHEA) | Lecturer & Study Area Coordinator | Media & Communication
Creative Industries Faculty | Queensland University of Technology | Z6-506, CI Precinct, Kelvin Grove

ph: +61 7 3138 8235 | email: ac.watson@qut.edu.au | web: www.qut.edu.au
<http://qut.academia.edu/AnneFrancesWatson>

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