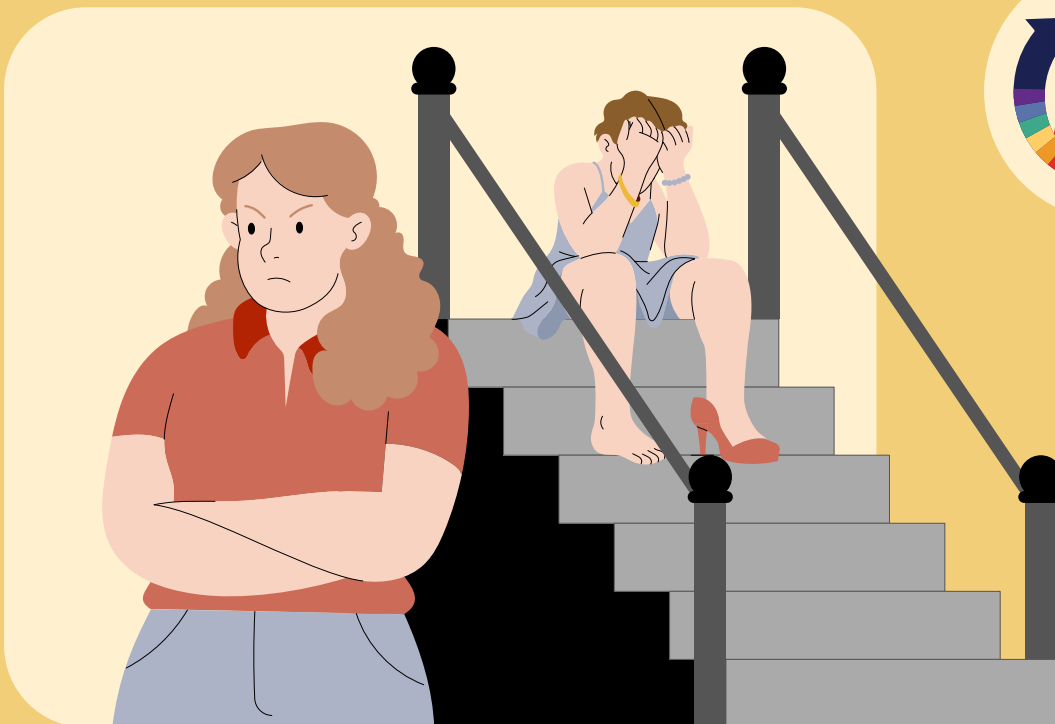


CONVERSION PRACTICES: AN EXPLAINER



What are conversion practices?

‘Conversion’ practices are activities that try to change or suppress someone’s sexual orientation or gender identity. They are also known as change or suppression practices.

Conversion practices can be formal or informal.

Formal conversion practices may include activities that are based on the idea that there is something wrong with being lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or queer, or asexual (LGBTQA), such as:

- counselling or therapy programs
- support groups
- spiritual care activities
- other psychological or medical interventions

Informal conversion practices are often everyday conversations or messages that may include telling someone to stop or hide being LGBTQA or making them leave the family home to try to get them to stop being LGBTQA.

Conversion practices can happen in many places including:

- the family home
- schools and universities
- faith organisations or communities
- youth groups
- or online.

They can be carried out by relatives, medical service providers, counsellors, people providing pastoral care, psychiatrists or psychologists.

Why have conversion practices been banned?

Conversion practices are banned because they do not work and are deeply harmful. Trying to change or suppress a person’s sexual orientation or gender identity can lead to long-term physical and mental health issues.

The aim of this law is to reduce the harm caused by conversion practices.

What does the law say about conversion practices?

In Victoria, there is a law against trying to make someone change or hide their sexuality if they are gay, lesbian, bisexual, or asexual, and trying to stop someone from being transgender or non-binary. This law is called the *Change or Suppression (Conversion) Practices Prohibition Act 2021 (Vic)*.

Under this law, a change or suppression practice is where someone must have done something, a practice or activity, and it must be:

- directed at someone (or a group of people),
- because of their sexual orientation or gender identity, and
- it must have been done to try to make that person stop or suppress being LGBTQA.

It is also illegal to advertise conversion practices or to send someone out of Victoria to participate in conversion practices.

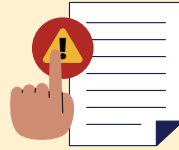
It is legal – and encouraged – to support or affirm someone's sexual orientation or gender identity.

You can provide acceptance and support for someone to be their authentic self, to help them explore, develop or express their sexuality or gender identity. This law says that you can assist a person who is undergoing, or thinking about, a gender transition.

The law allows people to have and express personal beliefs.

People can share their views about sexuality and gender, deliver sermons and teach classes on topics like gender, sexuality, marriage, celibacy, or homosexuality, as long as they are not doing this to try to make someone change or suppress their gender identity or sexual orientation.

This law and the others like it around Australia were developed based on research into the harms that conversion practices have caused, and evidence that they don't work. Governments consulted widely with community, families, survivors and faith leaders when creating the laws.



What can you do about conversion practices?

If you, or someone you know, has experienced conversion practices in Victoria, or been taken outside of Victoria for a conversion practice, you can make a report to the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (the Commission). Reporting to the Commission may help to stop these practices from continuing or happening to someone else. (See the fact sheet 'How to make a report about 'conversion' practices')

You can also contact the Commission to get more information about change and suppression practices. Our services are free and confidential. Our staff are experienced and sensitive to these issues. They can answer any questions you have.

You can then decide if you want to make a report or not.

To contact the Victoria Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission



Phone: 1300 292 153
Monday-Friday 9am – 5 pm



Email: enquiries@veohrc.vic.gov.au