

FACT SHEET

Change or Suppression (Conversion) Practices Prohibition Bill 2020



This fact sheet explains the proposed law, what it says and what it means for you.

What is the *Change or Suppression (Conversion) Practices Prohibition Bill 2020*?

The proposed law will help protect Victorians from the serious damage and trauma caused by practices which try to change or suppress someone's sexual orientation or gender identity.

Why are we doing it?

Change or suppression practices cause life-long harm and trauma. This has been identified in a number of reports in Australia and around the world.

There is nothing wrong with people having a particular sexuality or living as a gender different to the one people were raised as. These people are not "broken", and do not need "healing" or "fixing".

Will the ban involve criminal and/or civil law?

The ban includes both criminal and civil responses. The civil law will deal with most cases, avoiding court. An agency will consider and respond to reports of change or suppression practices, and have power to investigate serious or systemic change or suppression practices. People can be fined, but not imprisoned, for advertising change or suppression practices.

Criminal offences have also been created for the most serious practices which cause injury. It will also be a criminal offence where someone is taken out of Victoria to undergo change or suppression practice which causes injury.

What the proposed law does not ban

- Discussions with a religious leader about understanding or exploring sexual orientation or gender identity.
- Prayer – unless it is directly used to change or suppress sexual orientation or gender identity.
- Choosing to be celibate before marriage.
- Expressing views or opinions for or against particular sexual orientations and gender identities.
- Discussing and sharing religious teachings on sexuality.
- Psychological counselling for children with gender dysphoria.

Frequently asked questions

Isn't a change or suppression (conversion) practice just about using electro-shock therapy?

No. Change or suppression practices can include counselling, psychology or psychotherapy, formal behaviour-change programs, support groups, prayer-based approaches and exorcisms.

If someone comes to me asking to be changed, are there any issues if I try to help them?

Yes, because it is not possible for a person to change their sexual orientation or gender identity – but there are no issues with supporting or encouraging them to seek professional help and guidance from a health service.

What will happen if the proposed law passes?

There will be a 12-month period before it starts to allow important implementation work to be completed. The Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission will lead this and consult widely with Victorians. A key aspect of this early work includes preparation and translation of education materials in multiple languages.

Will someone go to prison if they make remarks about sexual orientation or gender identity which distresses or angers another person?

No. A person may only be imprisoned for the worst types of practices causing injury or serious injury. In this case, injury does not include distress, grief, fear or anger.

Can I run a support group designed to help people not act on their same-sex attraction?

No. This type of support group is designed to suppress a person's sexual orientation. However, you may support or encourage others to seek professional help or guidance from a health service.

Does the proposed law change the definition of family violence to include change or suppression practices?

No. The definition of family violence already includes emotional and psychological abuse. As such, it is already an act of family violence for a person to try to force their family members to change their sexual orientation or gender identity using emotional and psychological abuse.

Does the proposed law remove the rights of parents about health decisions for children who are questioning their gender identity?

No. The proposed law does not make any changes to health laws about the rights of parents in relation to children questioning their gender identity.

Support and contact details

For more information please contact: consultation@justice.vic.gov.au

If this information is upsetting or worrying, you can get help and support by contacting the following organisations:

- **Thorne Harbour Health** is Victoria's largest LGBTI health organisation serving the health needs of LGBTIQ communities to ensure all gender, sex, and sexually diverse individuals are treated with dignity and can participate fully in society. Contact 1800 134 840 or at enquiries@thorneharbour.org
- **Queerspace** is an LGBTIQ+ health and wellbeing support service. Contact 03 9663 6733 or enquiries@ds.org.au
- **Rainbow Door** is a free specialist LGBTIQ+ helpline providing information, support and referral to all LGBTIQ+ Victorians, their family and friends during the COVID-19 crisis and beyond. Contact 1800 729 367 or 0480 017 246 (SMS support)
- **Australian GLBTIQ Multicultural Council** is a national body that advocates for the rights of multicultural and multifaith LGBTIQ individuals and communities and provides referrals to existing services, community groups and agencies. Contact: contact@agmc.org.au
- **Switchboard** provides peer-driven support services for LGBTIQ+ people, their families, allies and communities from 10am – 6pm. Contact 1800 729 367 or support@rainbowdoor.org.au
- **QLife** provides LGBTI peer support and referral for people wanting to talk about sexuality, identity, gender, bodies, feelings or relationships from 3pm – midnight. Contact: 1800 184 527
- **Lifeline** provides 24-hour crisis support and suicide prevention services. Contact: 13 11 14
- **Kids Helpline** provides 24-hour counselling service for young people aged 5 to 25 years. Contact: 1800 551 800 or counsellor@kidshelpline.com.au
- **MensLine Australia** provides 24-hour help, support, referrals and counselling services for men. Contact: 1300 789 978
- **Suicide Call Back Service** provides 24-hour counselling for suicide prevention and mental health via telephone, online and video for anyone affected by suicidal thoughts. Contact: 1300 659 467
- **Beyond Blue** provides 24-hour information, advice and support for people affected by anxiety, depression and suicide. Contact: 1300 224 636
- **Headspace** provides information and support about mental health and wellbeing. Contact: 1800 650 890
- **ReachOut** provides information, support and resources about mental health issues for people under 25 years. Contact: au.reachout.com