

# Ensuring safe spaces for faith



## **Protect the free expression of sexual orientation and gender identity by preventing practices which harm queer, trans or gender-diverse people.**

Love, safety and acceptance are central to all faith communities. Yet some communities have left queer, trans or gender-diverse people feeling excluded. Research tells us that people are at greater risk of mental and physical harm when not supported by their faith communities.

In response to this, Victoria has passed a new law. This law bans any attempts to change or suppress a person's expression of sexuality or gender.

Affirming queer, trans and gender-diverse people is essential for their health and wellbeing.

### **Identify change or suppression practices**

This is any activity that tries to change or hide a person's sexuality or gender identity. Previously these practices have been referred to as forms of 'conversion therapy'. These practices may attempt to intervene through education, counselling or through medical procedures.

Evidence shows that these practices cause ongoing trauma and long-term health issues. They also increase the risk of suicide and self-harm.

Queer, trans and gender-diverse people have a right to feel safe everywhere, including in faith communities. This law, which protects people against change or suppression practices, affirms this.

### **Understand the new law**

Since February 2022, Victoria has banned change or suppression practices. The legal definition for these banned practices is:

**A practice or  
conduct directed  
towards a person**

**On the basis  
of their  
sexual orientation  
or gender identity**

**For the  
purpose of  
changing or  
suppressing their  
sexual orientation or  
gender identity, with  
or without their  
consent.**

The new law criminalises practices that cause injury or serious injury. This covers:

- practices that cause physical injury or harm to mental health, whether temporary or permanent
- practices that cause serious injury – an injury that endangers life, or is substantial and has an ongoing impact.

The new law also aims to limit access to these harmful practices. There may be a criminal offence handed down for:

- removing someone from Victoria to access these practices interstate or overseas
- advertising these practices
- providing a referral to someone who will perform these practices.

These are all unlawful, even if a person requests these to happen themselves.

### **For medical and psychological professionals**

This new law makes sure queer, trans and gender-diverse people are safe from these harmful practices when dealing with the health care system. Health professionals must continue to provide medical and psychological treatments in line with professional standards, and refer on to supportive specialists where needed. Health professionals who refer people to or perform change or suppression practices may be in breach of the law.

*This law makes sure that all people can enjoy their faith without carrying out or being subject to harmful change or suppression practices.*

## **How can the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission help?**

The Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (the Commission) can:

- receive any reports which outline change or suppression practices
- investigate serious, systemic or persistent practices
- offer targeted education to faith organisations, health providers and people of faith.

### **How to report change or suppression practices**

If you have experienced or seen these practices, please report it to the Commission. You, or a representative, can contact us.

**Call:** 1300 292 153

**Call using an interpreter:** 1300 152 494

**Email:** [enquiries@veohrc.vic.gov.au](mailto:enquiries@veohrc.vic.gov.au)

**Visit:** [humanrights.vic.gov.au/get-help/](http://humanrights.vic.gov.au/get-help/)

### **Help and support**

Rainbow Door provides specialist LGBTIQ+ information, support and referral services.

**Call:** 1800 729 367

**SMS:** 0480 017 246

**Email:** [support@rainbowdoor.org.au](mailto:support@rainbowdoor.org.au)

For additional help and support visit: [charlee.org.au/getsupport](http://charlee.org.au/getsupport)

### **Further resources**

**About the Change or Suppression (Conversion) Practices Prohibition Act 2021**

Visit: [humanrights.vic.gov.au/change-orsuppression-practices/about-the-csp-act](http://humanrights.vic.gov.au/change-orsuppression-practices/about-the-csp-act)

**Australian LGBTIQ Multicultural Council. This is the peak body for multicultural and multifaith LGBTIQ+ individuals and groups**

Visit: [agmc.org.au](http://agmc.org.au)