



## Conversion Therapy Legislation – AP Interview with Chris Duke

1. Question: When you mention “conversion therapy”, many people think that we are referring to abusive and coercive practices – electric shock treatment, forced medication, forced confinement, forced nudity, forced sleep deprivation, etc, - all used in an attempt to make a gay person straight. Do we need a “conversion therapy ban” to outlaw these practices?

Chris Duke: No, we already have laws against such practices. Activists and politicians in the media mention them to get our attention and make us angry – so it’s a very effective way to gain public support for a conversion therapy ban.

2. Q: So what exactly do legislators want to make illegal through introducing a conversion therapy ban?

Chris Duke: Legislators want to make it illegal for us to give people who are experiencing unwanted same-sex attraction or gender dysphoria normal Christian support and care based on the Bible’s view of human sexuality. That’s really what the conversion therapy ban is all about – banning Christian care and support. If the demands of LGBTQ activists are met, it will become illegal to pray for someone experiencing unwanted same-sex attraction or distressing gender confusion; illegal to read the Bible with them; illegal to hold Christian support groups for people dealing with these issues; illegal to provide them with Biblical or professional counselling, even if that’s what these individuals want and need. It may even become illegal to preach or teach what the Bible says about gender, sexuality and marriage. It’s really quite shocking, but these new laws, if passed, will make it a criminal offence to practise authentic biblical Christianity. And the penalties for those who break these laws

are severe – in the ACT, which already has conversion therapy ban legislation, Christians face fines of up to \$24,000 and/or jail terms of up to 18 months.

3. Q: This sounds like the end of religious freedom in Australia. How could anyone justify introducing such oppressive laws?”

Chris Duke: Well, one thing to keep in mind is that the general public link “conversion therapy” with abusive practices. So most people think it should be banned. Even many politicians don’t really understand that the real target of the ban is normal Christian practices. And for those who do, most have been fed the lie that if you teach what the Bible says about same-sex relationships, and human sexuality and gender in general, it harms LGBTQ people. So for those who really understand this legislation and support it, they think that to protect gay and transgender persons from harm, you have to make Biblical beliefs and practices criminal offences.

4. Q: Is there any evidence that Biblical Christianity does harm LGBTQ persons?

Chris Duke: “A study published by academics from Latrobe University in 2017 called *Preventing Harm Promoting Justice – Responding to Conversion Therapy in Australia* describes the experiences of 13 same-sex attracted persons person who reported they were harmed by churches and organisations who believed that same-sex relationships are wrong and that same-sex attraction should be resisted. But the investigators made no effort to interview LGBTQ identifying people who have

benefited from Christian support and care or counselling.

5. Q: So is there any evidence that same-sex attracted and transgender persons are helped and not harmed through churches and ministries that uphold the teachings of the Bible?

Chris Duke: Yes, an Australian organisation called CAUSE (Coalition Against Unsafe Sexual Education) have initiated an online survey found at [freetochange.org](http://freetochange.org) where same-sex attracted individuals and people with gender dysphoria who have been helped by Christian individuals, churches and Christian ministries, alongside other kinds of professional counselling and services, can describe their positive experiences. So far 70 individuals have completed the survey, and the results, which are freely available on line.

6. Q: So the main justification for a conversion therapy ban outlawing normal Christian care for LGBTQ identifying individuals is to say that biblical beliefs and practices damage these people, but evidence abounds to suggest the opposite.

Chris Duke: Yes, it really does. In fact if you visit the [freetochange.org](http://freetochange.org) website you can watch video testimonies and read written testimonies of many of the people who took part in the survey. A number of them say that Christian ministries and professional counselling services were life-saving for them - that if they did not have these supports and services they probably would not be alive today.

7. Q: C How ironic that the people who will be hurt most by the introduction of a conversion therapy ban are the very people the ban is supposed to protect.

Chris Duke: Yes, I'm very concerned for adolescents and adults struggling with these issues, but I am also extremely concerned about the rising number of children who are experiencing gender confusion and being channelled into gender clinics where they are given dangerous experimental transgender treatments like puberty blocking hormones, cross-sex hormones and surgeries – mastectomies and reconstructive genital surgery. A conversion therapy ban will make it a criminal offence for a parent to seek to dissuade their child from attempting to “transition.” Under a conversion therapy ban, loving Christian parents will go to jail and face massive fines, while their children are irrevocably harmed.

8. Q: What can we do to stop this from happening?”

Chris Duke: The Victorian Labor Party are expected to introduce their conversion therapy ban legislation to the Parliament's Lower House in November, and because it has a clear majority there, we can expect the ban to pass the Lower House unless we can convince Labor MPs to cross the floor, and the Opposition to vote against it. We should make that our first goal. Failing that, our only chance to have the conversion therapy ban blocked will be to persuade Liberal Party MPs and cross-bench MPs to vote against the Ban in the Upper House. It will be critical in the weeks leading up to an Upper House vote on the conversion therapy ban that as many people as possible contact Liberal and cross-bench MPs to express their concerns about the bill, and their determination to vote against all who support it at the next Victorian State election. And of course the most important thing of all we can do is to pray to Almighty God and ask him to move the hearts of his people, and those elected to represent us. We must pray that the true nature of the conversion therapy ban and the danger that it poses, especially to the vulnerable, be fully understood by all Victorians, and especially by those who have the ability to defeat the bill in the Victorian Parliament.

A prayer: Lord God Almighty, we cry out to you, and ask that conversion therapy ban legislation not pass into law in the State of Victoria or other States. We pray this for the sake of the vulnerable among us who will be most harmed if this proposal becomes law. We pray that children with gender dysphoria might be spared the irrevocable harm caused by the social interventions, hormone treatments and surgeries which would be made almost mandatory if the ban becomes law. We pray the Victorian adolescents and adults struggling with same-sex attraction and gender dysphoria might continue to access every kind of spiritual and professional support and service that they seek and need, supports and services that would be made criminal if the ban is passed by the Parliament. And we pray that fundamental rights of citizens to freedom of conscience, freedom of speech and freedom of religion, particularly in relation to human sexuality and gender, may continue to be enjoyed by all, especially by faithful Christian individuals, and faithful churches and ministries. May the very great dangers associated with this legislation become evident to all – first to your people that they might be moved to pray and act, and ultimately by those Lower and Upper House MPs who have the ability to block this legislation. We pray these things in the name of Jesus. Amen.