



## Call for strenuous opposition to Victorian 'conversion therapy' ban legislation

*By Christopher Duke*

### ADVANCE WARNING OF A LOOMING PUBLIC POLICY DISASTER

In recent months, “conversion therapy” bans have been made law in Queensland and the ACT. In the coming weeks, the state of Victoria is set to follow suit.

But, make no mistake, such legislation is diabolical public policy.

It is disastrous for gender-dysphoric children. It is disastrous for parents. It is disastrous for individuals experiencing unwanted same-sex attraction. It is bad for teachers, psychologists, counsellors and medical practitioners. It is bad for individual Christians, bad for Christian leaders and bad for the Church. It is bad for freedom of speech. It is bad for freedom of religion.

Prohibiting so-called conversion therapy is also terrible public policy, because it is even harmful to the people it purports to protect. A ban on Christian counselling, prayer and advice only traps those who are seeking a way out of homosexuality and gender confusion in their state of turmoil, with no one to whom one may legally turn.

### THE DEVIL IN THE DETAIL

It might be thought that this is reasonable legislation, designed to outlaw abusive practices such as electric-shock therapy, forced nudity or sleep deprivation, but we already have laws which criminalise such abusive practices. In reality, this type of legislation criminalises “any practice or treatment that seeks to change, suppress or eliminate an individual’s sexual orientation or gender identity, including efforts to eliminate sexual and/or romantic attractions or feelings toward individuals of the same gender, or efforts to change gender expressions”. (Conversion\_Practices\_Discussion\_Paper, page 2, <https://engage.vic.gov.au/conversion-practices-ban>).

[conversion-practices-ban](https://engage.vic.gov.au/conversion-practices-ban)).

The definition is deliberately worded broadly so as to include (without explicitly saying so) all manner of Christian practice, care and support. The legislation is undeniably aimed at Bible-believing Christians.

### BAD FOR VULNERABLE CHILDREN AND THEIR CARERS

Under such legislation, a child who experiences gender dysphoria (the discomfort persons feel when their biological or physical sex doesn’t match their own sense of gender), and someone at the child’s school recommends the child be taken to a gender clinic, the child’s parents will face criminal charges if they do not support the child’s “transition” to the opposite gender.

Penalties under the ACT’s recent conversion therapy laws include fines of up to \$24,000, imprisonment for 12 months, or both (<https://www.loc.gov/law/foreign-news/article/australia-bills-banning-conversion-therapy-enacted-in-two-jurisdictions/>). Parents charged will almost certainly lose custody of their children. Conversion therapy bans trample on parents’ rights to discern and choose what is best for their child.

Those few teachers, counsellors, psychologists and medical practitioners who fail to promote and facilitate a dysphoric child’s transitioning -regardless of parental consent-will likewise fall foul of the law.

In reality, gender dysphoria is usually a passing phase in the lives of affected children. The American Psychological Association’s *Handbook of Sexuality and Psychology* has shown that, before the current fashion of transgender affirmation, 75 to 95 per cent

of pre-pubertal children who were uncomfortable with their biological sex eventually outgrew that distress and reverted to accepting and embracing a gender identity corresponding to their biological sex. (<https://www.dailysignal.com/2017/07/03/im-pediatrician-transgender-ideology-infiltrated-field-produced-large-scale-child-abuse/> ).

The data shows that “facilitating a dysphoric child’s transitioning” by subjecting them to the full gamut of social, hormonal and surgical interventions practised at gender clinics, usually results in 100% of these children emerging with a combination of sterility and surgical mutilations and will be still be 20 times more likely to commit suicide than their peers as adults (<https://www.heritage.org/gender/commentary/sex-reassignment-doesnt-work-here-the-evidence>).

The safest thing to do for a child with gender dysphoria is to “watch and wait”, while offering compassionate, supportive care and talk therapy that helps the family identify and process the causes for the child’s distress. So called ‘conversion therapy bans’ makes the best and safest forms of care illegal, while the unscientific interventions that cause irreversible damage become mandatory.

This is diabolical public policy.

### **BAD FOR VULNERABLE ADULTS AND THOSE WHO SUPPORT THEM**

Conversion therapy ban legislation is similarly disastrous for persons experiencing unwanted same-sex attraction. Under these laws it becomes a criminal offence for a psychologist or counsellor to provide any form of support or talk therapy to help a client who seeks a lessening of same-sex sexual desire or change of sexual orientation.

It even becomes a criminal offence to simply pray for a person with unwanted same-sex attraction, to read the Bible with them, or to teach a biblical view of human sexuality and gender, if the intention or effect of these actions is to lessen or eliminate sexual and/or romantic attractions toward individuals of the same gender. A person who in any way supports them in their efforts to be free from same-sex attraction, or even just to be celibate, is liable to face criminal charges with commensurate hefty fines and jail terms.

What this amounts to is unprecedented and unjustifiable counselling censorship and a gross violation of personal privacy and autonomy. Consenting adults who desire change are barred by the State from accessing the professional services and personal and/or religious support they seek.

### **BAD FOR THE CHURCH**

Conversion therapy bans also represent a premeditated and deliberate attack on biblical Christianity. LGBTQ activists and their allies claim that merely to assert that homosexuality is sinful, or that sexual intimacy is intended by God to be enjoyed within heterosexual marriage, causes harm to LGBTQ persons. (Preventing Harm, Promoting Justice: Responding to LGBT Conversion Therapy. <https://www.hrlc.org.au/reports/preventing-harm>). *Their stated goal therefore is to force churches to alter what they believe and teach about human sexuality!*

Some churches have chosen to fall into line with LGBTQ ideology rather than defend biblical standards. In the UK, for example, the Moderator of the Baptist Union Rev. David Mayne, the Anglican Bishop of Liverpool Rev. Paul Bayes and certain other religious leaders have written to the British Government (<https://ozanne.foundation/inter-religious-advisory-board-write-to-sec-of-state-regarding-need-to-ban-conversion-therapy/>) recommending that the UK Parliament enact legislation to enforce LGBTQ-affirming ideology on religious organisations:

*Whilst we recognise and applaud your overall aim to “end conversion therapy”....– which we and others are committed to helping them do.*

*We urge you to make it clear that the UK will not tolerate those who practise conversion therapy in any form, **whether consensual or not**, and that those who practice it will be prosecuted. **This will have the impact of causing religious leaders to think twice, as they will be loath to risk having a criminal record that would stop them from following their vocation.***

In contrast, faithful persons who dare teach, either in public or private, what the Bible makes plain – that homosexuality is a sin, and that same-sex sexual desire is to be resisted – may face criminal charges under conversion therapy ban legislation. The State will mandate what citizens are allowed to believe and what they are not allowed to believe with regard to human sexuality, under threat of \$20,000 fines and 12 to 18-month jail terms. With this one piece of legislation, our freedoms of speech and religion will be abolished and an age of communist-like tyranny over the church will begin.

### **CALL TO ACTION**

Legislation that forces carers to act against the best interests of gender-dysphoric children, tramples the right to seek help of one’s choice, censors counsellors, makes best-care practices



illegal, violates freedoms of speech and religion, criminalises the utterance of God's word and outlaws authentic Christianity, is simply diabolical – it is of the devil.

Christians are urged to pray to Almighty God and to use all democratic means available to stand against the passing of laws banning conversion therapy in Victoria.

Please learn all you can about this legislation now before the

anticipated Bill comes before the Victorian Parliament.

And be prepared for action.

*Chris Duke is convenor of the Presbyterian Church of Victoria  
Church and Nation Committee.*