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The Unheard Story

By Leah Arnold & Moira Deeming

If it were possible to hold the Victorian government to the same standards that they are inflicting on Victorians in their Suppression and/or Change Practices Bill (2020), they would likely end up with a \$10,000 fine and 10 years in jail. But of course, that cannot be - as usual it is one rule for us and another rule for them.

According to the government, if parents teach their own children the stock-standard cultural or religious beliefs that sex is inherent and unchangeable and that humans were designed for heterosexuality, that is *criminal suppression*; but if the government criminalises parents for passing on their cultural and religious heritage to their own children, that is *positive suppression*.

According to the government, if an expert clinician 'denounces' the affirmation-only model of treatment for gender confusion as 'harmful' and 'unscientific', that is *criminal suppression*; but if the government denounces and criminalises all treatments for gender confusion except the most radical, experimental, invasive and irreversible one, that is *positive suppression*.

According to the government, if a woman 'denounces' the idea that men can 'identify' as women as being 'harmful' and 'wrong', that is *criminal suppression*; but if the government denounces and criminalises the use of biological sex in speech, sport and services, that is *positive suppression*.

Using the powers of the state, the Victorian government is engaging in the most widespread change and suppression practices ever seen before in Australia. They are coercing Victorians to change and suppress their ordinary personal, scientific, political and religious beliefs on pain of huge fines and decade long jail terms! This government has blatantly turned its back on the principles of tolerance, freedom of speech, association and religion.

And yet, you could easily be forgiven for believing that the Suppression and/or Change practices Bill was designed to stop

a monstrous pandemic of abusive 'conversion' therapies lurking around every corner in Victoria, because most of the media have simply refused to present the facts of the Bill for public discussion.

I (Leah Arnold) am an ex-lesbian, as well as a someone who experienced gender dysphoria as a child. I voluntarily sought counsel from Christian psychologists, ministries, and people who had walked this journey before me- every step of which will become illegal under this Bill. For the record, none of these avenues of support were ever harmful, coercive, or ineffective. In fact, the support and counsel I received saved my life (read my story [here](#)). Ex-LGBT people like me are living proof that real, lasting change is possible, that suicides have been prevented, and that it is good for people to have the freedom to choose the type of help and support they want- including (shock horror) the religious kind.

But ex-LGBT voices like mine, that testify to the life-saving benefits of counselling for unwanted homosexual or transgender feelings, have been cut from public discourse. When we attempt to speak up, we are silenced and dismissed as ignorant bigots by LGBT activists. Of course, these are just lazy slurs, since obviously having once identified as homosexual or transgender, most of us still have friends within the wider, more reasonable, LGBT community. Blackmail, manipulation and self-satisfied bullying are just some of the tactics used over the past 12 months to keep sympathetic but influential people from lending us a platform.

You might be wondering if silencing us is justifiable because there is probably only a handful of us that exist. Well, it may appear that there are only a few of us on record. But actually there are five times as many of us ex-LGBT on the public record who have been helped by the ordinary counselling practices about to be banned by this government than there are of those that claim to have been harmed by them.

The Human Rights Law Centre and La Trobe University's 2018

research paper, 'Preventing Harm, Promoting Justice (PHPJ)' provides the actual 'evidence' used to justify the Suppression Practices Bill. And we now know that the Victorian Bill is the harshest of its kind in the entire world in terms of how broad its definition of a 'suppression practice' is and also in terms of the extreme punishments it allows (up to 10 years jail and \$10,000 in fines). There are many serious flaws in the PHPJ paper, but perhaps the most fundamental is that this 'research' sought to prove a preconceived conclusion, not to collect objective data. The author only interviewed participants who claimed to have been harmed by 'conversion therapies'. There were no attempts to interview any former LGBT people who sought out, consented to and benefited from the counselling and supports which are about to be redefined as abusive 'suppression practices'. Even more astoundingly, they only presented 15 people claiming to have been harmed by such practices. This is not surprising to those of us involved in this arena, because we know that shame based counselling has long since been abandoned in the Church and that the secular clinician based physical abuses were criminalised decades ago.

Conversely, at *Free To Change*, we have had 78 former-LGBT participants come forward to share their experiences and provide analytical data on the *positive* effects that professional and religious counsel/support over unwanted sexual or gender issues, has had on their lives. This research proves that the support and counsel that participants *voluntarily sought* was not only *helpful* for their mental and physical health (with significant improvements in anxiety, depression, suicidal ideation, self-image, and relationships), but in addition, their *unwanted* same-sex attraction and gender dysphoria was significantly reduced. Many former-LGBT people declined to participate only because they feared personal and professional blowback from the LGBT activists.

Of course, the government claims to have completed a wide

community consultation process using the *Engage Victoria* survey when designing the Bill. However, the wording of that survey made it functionally impossible to register disagreement with the Bill and none of the submissions like ours, which documented positive experiences of ex-LGBT people, were ever acknowledged or quoted in the Consultation Outcomes Report. Had they genuinely taken our submissions into account, their conclusions that 'change in sexual orientation is impossible' and 'all conversion therapy practices are harmful' simply could not have been sustained.

To recap, the 'research' which directly informed the most draconian anti-freedom legislation in Australian history is based on only 15 participants, all of whom were selected because of their stated agreement with the author's personal opinions, and that all recommended amendments, conflicting research and submissions have been ignored by the government and the media.

We've been told that the LGBT community are an oppressed and powerless minority, and yet it is clear that they hold and freely wield vast power to suppress and change any views and voices which do not promote their narrative. The hypocrisy is truly ugly.

Sadly, the LGBT lobbyists' unsubstantiated claims have been uncritically absorbed by the public, who mistakenly assume that not being presented with valid counter-arguments means that none must exist. The media and the government have failed the test of unbiased public service on this issue and if ordinary people of all political and cultural stripes don't put up a fight, the repercussions for political freedom will be dire.

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