



THE CHRISTIAN
INSTITUTE

The “gold standard” conversion therapy ban?

The reality of the law in Victoria, Australia

UPDATED AUGUST 2026



Foreword

Campaigners for a conversion therapy law have consistently called for governments across the UK to follow the example of Victoria, Australia.

Not only does Victoria's conversion therapy law make it illegal not to affirm a person's declared trans identity, but official state guidance on how to avoid prosecution under the law also tells Christians how they can and cannot pray.

This is not a model that any democratic government should emulate.

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Jayne Ozanne



Alicia Kearns MP

Calls for the UK to emulate Victoria

“ *the [ban] in Victoria is seen as the gold standard* ”

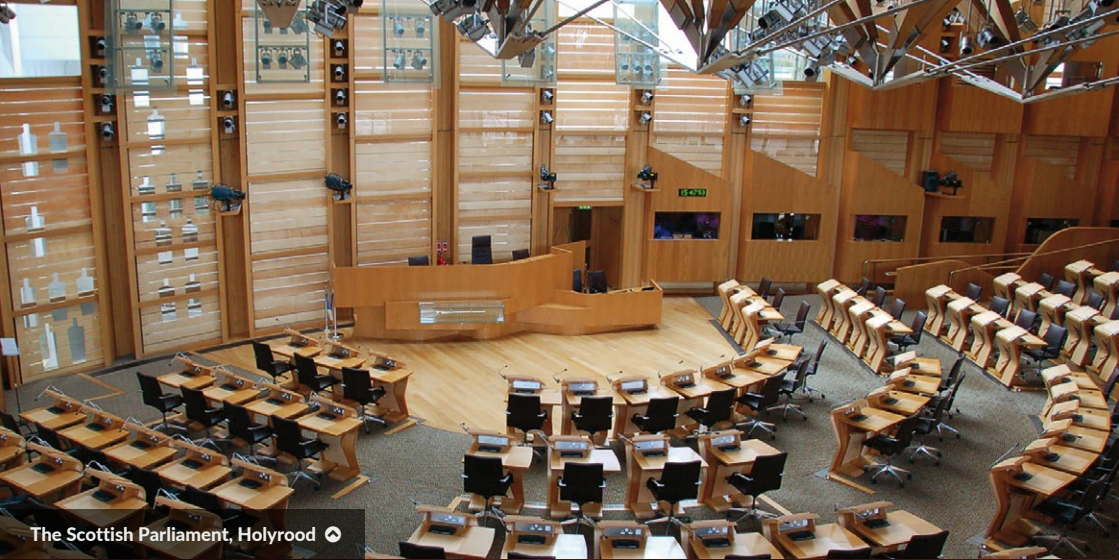
Jayne Ozanne – Founder and Former Chair of the Ban Conversion Practices campaign ¹

“ *[the conversion therapy ban] must be based off... best international practice such as Victoria State, Aus* ”

Kieran Aldred – Former Head of Policy, Stonewall ²

“ *The model that's been passed in Victoria is a good one and it includes both criminal and civil response which is really important.* ”

Alicia Kearns – Member of Parliament for Rutland and Stamford (Conservative) ³



The Scottish Parliament, Holyrood ↗



↶ Peter Tatchell

“ the Victoria legislation in Australia provides one of the best practice examples ”

The Scottish Parliament's Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee ⁴

“ we've got the Australian state of Victoria, which has an excellent model that works well ”

Peter Tatchell – LGBT campaigner ⁵

“ This Victoria ban is by far the best example of a complete ban on conversion practices. ”

Matthew Hyndman – Co-founder, Ban Conversion Therapy (NI) ⁶



Introduction

Victoria's Change or Suppression (Conversion) Practices Prohibition Act 2021 has become something of a model for other conversion therapy bans around the world.

It criminalises any practice deemed to be aimed at “changing or suppressing” an individual's “sexual orientation or gender identity”.

The penalty is up to ten years in prison or a maximum fine of over A\$200,000 (approximately £105,000).

Alongside the police, the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission is empowered by the Act to enforce the ban.

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Have you experienced a change or suppression practice?

Everyone has the right to live their true, authentic selves, regardless of who they are attracted to or what gender they identify with. It is against the law for someone to try to change or suppress – or make you change or suppress – your sexual orientation or gender identity, even if you ask for help to do so.



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Understanding these practices and affirming your identity

Change or suppression (also known as conversion) practices are teachings, counselling, spiritual care activities, or other psychological or medical interventions based on the ideology that there is something wrong with or broken about people with diverse sexualities or gender identities.

It is common for LGBTIQ people to be told that they are broken or damaged because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

You are not broken or damaged, and you do not need to be fixed.

“Prohibited practices”

The Commission has issued official guidance⁷ explaining what is now prohibited under Victoria’s ban.

The following are extracts [**our emphasis added**]:

“

Have you experienced these illegal practices?

Conversion practices and experiences vary widely. Practices ultimately aim to change or suppress someone’s sexual orientation or gender identity.

This could be through **mixed-orientation marriage, celibacy, or abstinence**, as well as **not affirming someone’s gender identity** or insisting that someone does not change their gender.

”



Traditional Christian beliefs



Examples of prohibited practices

Practices that may be considered illegal under the Act include:

a religious leader meeting one-on-one... and pressuring [a member of their congregation] to suppress and ignore their feelings of same-sex attraction by **practising celibacy**



It's not difficult to see how a church leader who affirms Christian sexual ethics in a pastoral conversation could be wrongly accused of 'pressuring' someone. Christians believe the Bible's teaching on marriage and identity is liberating, not suppressing. However, these beliefs are often characterised negatively by those who disagree with church teaching.

For 2,000 years, Christians have taught that man-woman marriage is the only context for sexual intimacy. Unmarried Christians must be free to seek support from a church leader or Christian friend to help them follow their faith.



Church membership



Examples of prohibited practices

Practices that may be considered illegal under the Act include:

a religious leader telling a member of their congregation... that they will be **excommunicated** if they continue their same-sex relationship



The temporary or permanent removal of an individual's church membership rights is a last resort where a person persistently rejects basic church doctrine or ethics.

It could be compared to the ability of a political party to suspend someone for breaching membership rules. This is called freedom of association and is protected under the UK's international human rights obligations.



Youth groups



Examples of prohibited practices

Practices that may be considered illegal under the Act include:

using a youth group session to **provide 'support' through group prayer** to a young person to help them fight a desire to act on their feelings of same-sex attraction



Many church youth groups meet regularly to read the Bible and pray. Young people will often consider the meaning of a particular passage of the Bible, and ask how they might apply it in everyday life. Teenagers bring their struggles to these groups for prayerful support. That might be stress around exams or frustrations with parents or friends. Occasionally it might involve sexuality and relationships.

These everyday, harmless interactions must not become a battleground in which activists who oppose church teaching can call in the police to adjudicate on the content of people's prayers.



Parents and children

This section of the guidance was deleted following a public backlash.



Examples of prohibited practices

Practices that may be considered illegal under the Act include:

a parent... **refusing to support their child's request for medical treatment that will prevent physical changes from puberty** that do not align with the child's gender identity



The use of puberty-blocking drugs on gender-distressed children is very controversial. In up to 90% of cases, such distress resolves during puberty.⁸ But puberty blockers stop that very process.

Parents should not be criminalised for refusing to support the use of experimental and dangerous drugs on their children.



Prayer

The Victoria Act expressly states that the ban includes “carrying out a religious practice”, such as “a prayer based practice”. Guidance issued to ‘people of faith’ on complying with the law provides examples of prayers that could be considered unlawful. These include:

“

asking “for a person to not act on their attractions”;
talking “about a person’s brokenness or need to repent”;
asking “for long-term celibacy”.

”

The guidance goes on to list “ways to continue practicing your faith without causing harm”. It benevolently suggests: “You can continue to practice your faith through your private prayers with your God.” It says prayer is allowed if it reassures LGBT people they are “perfect the way they are”.

The Christian faith teaches that none of us are perfect. We all need forgiveness. It is extraordinary that any democratic government should take it upon itself to issue guidance prohibiting core Christian teaching.



MailOnline



Distraught parents now face prosecution if they don't accept gender transition of their vulnerable kids - as experts slam radical new law based on 'ideology and falsehood'

By CINDY LEVER FOR DAILY MAIL AUSTRALIA

PUBLISHED: 01:04, 14 August 2022 | UPDATED: 11:31, 14 August 2022

“Distraught parents now face prosecution”

Since Victoria’s conversion therapy law was introduced, parents have reported “fearing prosecution if they do anything to try to prevent potentially harmful and irreversible treatment”.¹⁰

One mum, Sarah, whose daughter suffers from anxiety and gender dysphoria, said that health professionals under the fear of prosecution,

“*were too scared to treat her [daughter]*”

Another mum, Jane, explained how taking her daughter out of a trans-affirming school could be considered ‘conversion therapy’:

“*If we said we were pulling her out because their policies were going to put her on a path of lifelong destructive choices that would have irreversible consequences, we’d be at risk of breaking the law.*”



‘Ask your children what pronouns to use’

Guidance has been issued to parents in Victoria on ‘talking with your child about sexuality and gender identity’,¹¹ as part of the state’s ongoing efforts to enforce its conversion therapy law.

It encourages parents to ask their children, “what pronouns and other language they would like you to use”.

Telling parents to affirm a child’s ‘gender identity’ is not a harmless act. As the Cass Review observes,¹² social transition – including the use of preferred pronouns – is a significant psychosocial intervention that can influence a young person’s future. For some young people, these acts of affirmation put them on a path to irreversible medical treatment. Evidence shows that “if adults ‘affirm’ a child as the opposite sex, the child will hold on to that belief for longer”.¹³

The guidance also lists ways parents risk contravening the conversion therapy law, such as “stopping your child from accessing LGBTQA support services”.



Religious leaders unable to provide care

In February 2026, four years after the legislation came into force, the Victorian Law Reform Commission launched a review.

In a group submission to the review, religious leaders with pastoral oversight for more than two million Victorians warn that the Act extends far beyond addressing harmful practices.¹⁴ They argue that its “broad overreach, ambiguity and ill-defined concepts of faith, has caused confusion in the community”. They say this is most notable among religious leaders and parents, who “appear to be disproportionately affected by the Act”.

Representing a range of religious traditions – including Anglican, Catholic, Sikh, Hindu and Muslim – the leaders say there has been “a chilling effect, particularly on religious leaders, many of whom feel constrained or unable to provide appropriate pastoral care to those seeking guidance for fear of breaching the law”.



1891 C.F. 1891



Is such a law viable in the UK?

It is obviously right to protect people from abuse and coercion. But the most shocking 'conversion therapy' abuses described by campaigners – such as so-called 'corrective rape' – are already illegal. Each part of the UK has comprehensive laws against sexual abuse, physical abuse, verbal abuse, harassment and coercion. A new law is unnecessary.

If any of the nations of the UK introduces a Victoria-style ban, it will be open to challenge in the courts under human rights law. Jason Coppel KC analysed the Victoria law in light of the European Convention on Human Rights and concluded it could breach four fundamental human rights.

Read Coppel's opinion at: [the.ci/coppel](https://www.the.ci/coppel)

Aidan O'Neill KC and Sarah Vine KC have also critiqued various proposals to change the law within the UK.¹⁵



We instructed lawyers to write to the Governments in Westminster, Holyrood and Stormont indicating our willingness to seek judicial review.¹⁶

Mainstream Christian views on sexual ethics, and feminist beliefs about gender, have been recognised by the courts as 'worthy of respect in a democratic society'. This means they are protected by equality and human rights law. They cannot and must not be criminalised.

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