

# Media Release

**Jaclyn Symes MLC**

Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council

Attorney-General

Minister for Emergency Services



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## PUTTING AN END TO CRUEL CONVERSION PRACTICES

Landmark reforms introduced by the Andrews Labor Government to protect LGBTIQ+ Victorians against harmful practices have come into effect, putting an end to bigoted practices that seek to change or suppress someone's sexual orientation or gender identity.

The *Change or Suppression (Conversion) Practices Prohibition Act 2021*, which was passed by Parliament last year, denounces change and suppression practices as false, deceptive and seriously harmful – and puts in place measures to hold perpetrators to account.

From today, people who subject others to change or suppression practices that cause serious injury can face criminal charges – with tough penalties of up to 10 years' jail.

Anyone who advertises change or suppression practices faces a maximum fine of almost \$10,000, while taking a person from Victoria to subject them to such a practice which causes injury attracts a maximum penalty of two years' jail.

Informed by the experiences of survivors and trauma-informed responses, the laws empower the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (VEOHRC) to accept and act on reports of change or suppression practices from any person.

VEOHRC's civil response scheme will support survivors, address the harm they have endured and educate the public about this ban, aiming to shift the culture surrounding conversion practices.

VEOHRC will ensure any response meets the needs and wishes of the affected person and will also be able to launch investigations where there is evidence of serious or systemic change or suppression practices.

The laws strike the right balance between the important and legitimate objective of protecting people from the harm caused by change or suppression practices while respecting the rights to freedom of speech and freedom of religion.

This reform builds on the Labor Government's proud track record of ensuring an inclusive Victoria. This work includes the first whole-of-government LGBTIQ+ Strategy, which sets out a 10-year plan to improve outcomes for the community across the state, making it easier to change the gender on birth certificates, and closing gaps in the Equal Opportunity Act to protect LGTBQ+ staff from discrimination in religious schools and organisations.

### Quotes attributable to Attorney-General Jaclyn Symes

*"Change or suppression practices are deeply harmful and total quackery – they must be stamped out."*

*"These laws send the clear message that these disgraceful practices are not tolerated in Victoria. We'll always have the LGBTIQ+ community's back – now the law does too."*

### Quote attributable to Minister for Equality Martin Foley

*"For too long, these insidious practices have been allowed to ruin lives under the guise that LGBTIQ+ people are 'broken' and need to be 'fixed.' That stops today."*

**Media contact:** Casey Lodge 0410 964 928 | [casey.lodge@minstaff.vic.gov.au](mailto:casey.lodge@minstaff.vic.gov.au)