



**Uniting Church in Australia**  
**ASSEMBLY**  
Assembly Standing Committee

**21 April 2024**

**DOCUMENT 6**

Title	<b>PREVENTING HARM FROM SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND GENDER IDENTITY CHANGE EFFORTS (SOGICE)</b>
Type of Paper (Information/Decision)	Information/National Resource
Assembly or ASC Minute	<p><b>The 16<sup>th</sup> Assembly reconvened resolved:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. To affirm the Uniting Church Statement, Dignity in Humanity, which states that 'every person is precious and entitled to live with dignity because they are God's children'.</li><li>2. To affirm that prayer and pastoral care are long-held Christian practices that will continue to be offered to support and uphold people, including LGBTIQA+ people, and agree that these Christian practices should not be used to harm or condemn any people including LGBTIQA+ people.</li><li>3. To recognise that sexual orientation and gender identity change efforts (SOGICE), often referred to as 'conversion therapy' are harmful to people's mental health and wellbeing.</li><li>4. To request the Assembly Standing Committee to develop a process to provide a national resource for congregations, agencies, and individuals to learn how they can help prevent harm from SOGICE ideology and practice.</li></ol> <p><b>ASC requested that the Task group will:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Consult with groups both within and outside the UCA representing people impacted by the SOGICE practices.</li><li>2. Investigate relevant research, resources already available from other religious bodies and human rights groups, and the legislation in place in various jurisdictions, regarding the practices and impacts of SOGICE.</li><li>3. Based on the above, develop a resource for congregations, agencies, and individuals to learn how they can help prevent harm from SOGICE ideology and practice.</li></ol> <p><b>Expected Outcomes:</b> At the conclusion of its work the Task Group will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Present a Resource Document to the Assembly Standing Committee for approval to be distributed across the life of the Church.</li><li>2. Present a brief report to the Assembly Standing Committee covering the work undertaken and any significant findings or recommendations.</li></ol>
Consultation	<p>Consultation only within the task group which included 2 people with lived experience of SOGICE. <i>**NB – divided opinion as to whether there needs to be wider consultation particularly within trans community to ensure diversity of experience.</i></p> <p>Task group researched existing material ranging from recognized LGBTQI+ publications and reports, ecumenical responses nationally and internationally, government legislation nationally and state-based.</p>

Purpose	To provide a national resource for congregations, agencies, and individuals to learn how they can help prevent harm from Sexual Orientation And Gender Identity Change Efforts (SOGICE), ideology and practice.
Rationale & Findings Summary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In the context of SOGICE, it is important to understand the difference between <i>appropriate</i> and <i>harmful</i> prayer and pastoral care</li> <li>• Pastoral care with and for SOGICE survivors has a particular emphasis on lived experience.</li> <li>• Need to be aware of the legal issues concerning SOGICE. This is a changing context, and the laws vary in detail between the States and Territories.</li> <li>• Need to listen to SOGICE survivors in order to rightly understand what is most appropriate pastoral care and support</li> <li>• This resource needs to be held alongside further consultation with the trans community within the UCA, as well as further consultation into the prevalence of SOGICE in urban, rural, regional and remote communities. Without this data, this resource remains only general in nature.</li> </ul>
Attachments	<b>“Welcome and safety for all - A resource for the Uniting Church on preventing harm from Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Change Efforts (SOGICE)”</b>
Proposal/s	<p>That the Standing Committee:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Receive the draft resource as a valuable contribution to assist the Uniting Church in understanding and implementing the decisions of the 16th Assembly to prevent harm from Sexual Orientation &amp; Gender Identity Change Efforts (SOGICE).</li> <li>2. Request the SOGICE Task Group to assist the Assembly in consulting those affected by SOGICE, including trans and gender diverse people, to ensure that it reflects their experiences and understanding.</li> <li>3. Consider further work is done in terms of incorporating the key elements of the decisions of the 16th Assembly SOGICE decisions into existing Code of Ethics training for ministry agents, utilising insights from the resource as appropriate.</li> <li>4. Consider further work is done around researching the prevalence of this issue in urban, rural, regional and remote communities, in order to ascertain whether more intentional contextual work needs to be done beyond this resource.</li> </ol>
Submitted by	Warren Talbot, Pitt St Uniting Church, NSW/ACT Synod Anthony Hinds, Brunswick Uniting Church, Vic/Tas Synod Nicole Mugford, Brunswick Uniting Church, Vic/Tas Synod (Rev Kath Behan, Assembly Resourcing Unit)



A RESOURCE FOR THE UNITING CHURCH ON  
PREVENTING HARM FROM SEXUAL ORIENTATION  
AND GENDER IDENTITY CHANGE EFFORTS (SOGICE)

# WELCOME & SAFETY FOR ALL



UNITING CHURCH IN  
AUSTRALIA ASSEMBLY  
2024

Produced by Uniting Church in Australia Assembly Resourcing Unit  
2024

Thanks to the SOGICE Task Group appointed by the 16th Assembly Standing Committee for their thoughtful work in this resource.

## Task Group members:

**Rev Lindsay Cullen, Convenor, (until December 2023)**, Rev Kath Behan, Convenor, (since December 2023), Anthony Hinds, Nicole Mugford, and Warren Talbot.

Lindsay Cullen is currently the General Secretary (Interim) of the Uniting Church in Australia Assembly and a member of the Leichhardt Uniting Church.

Kath Behan is a National Consultant, Uniting Church in Australia Assembly and a member of North Lakes Uniting Church, Queensland.

Anthony Hinds is a victim-survivor of SOGICE (<https://particularity.blog/>) and a member of Brunswick Uniting Church, Victoria.

Nicole Mugford is a survivor-advocate of SOGICE, a member of the 16th Assembly Standing Committee, and a member of Brunswick Uniting Church, Victoria.

Warren Talbot is a former Executive Director of LGBTIQ+ Health Australia, and a member of the Pitt Street Uniting Church, New South Wales.

Enquiries to [aru@nat.uca.org.au](mailto:aru@nat.uca.org.au)

# TABLE of Contents



Introduction	4
Biblical perspectives	5
Pastoral perspectives	6
Awareness of legal issues	8
Case studies	9
Resources and websites	11
Glossary	15
Appendix – breakdown of laws in states	16

## Introduction

The Uniting Church in Australia has a vision for Australian society which embodies justice, dignity and human rights for all. This vision is grounded in biblical witnesses, and testified in Uniting Church key documents and statements, commencing with the Basis of Union. As Australian society has moved towards increased equal participation for LGBTIQA+ people (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer/questioning, asexual and other people with diverse sexual and gender identities) there have been discussions about what has become known as SOGICE (sexual orientation and gender identity change efforts), also referred to as conversion therapy. (There is a glossary for the term 'LGBTIQA+' on page 15.)

SOGICE was one matter considered by the Sixteenth Assembly of the Uniting Church, in 2022. The Assembly meeting agreed as follows:

1. To affirm the Uniting Church Statement, *Dignity in Humanity*, which states that 'every person is precious and entitled to live with dignity because they are God's children'.
2. To affirm that prayer and pastoral care are long-held Christian practices that will continue to be offered to support and uphold people, including LGBTIQA+ people, and agree that these Christian practices should not be used to harm or condemn any people including LGBTIQA+ people.
3. To recognise that sexual orientation and gender identity change efforts (SOGICE), often referred to as 'conversion therapy' are harmful to people's mental health and wellbeing.
4. To request the Assembly Standing Committee to develop a process to provide a national resource for congregations, agencies, and individuals to learn how they can help prevent harm from SOGICE ideology and practice.

A Task Group was appointed and what follows is a short general resource which touches on several of the key issues with a focus on affirming and clarifying pastoral care. An information section provides references for those who would like to consider the range of issues in more detail. Many of the materials are available online.

We hope that this resource will assist in contributing to further responses from the Uniting Church, seeking to prevent harm from SOGICE ideology and practice, by affirming and offering the love of Christ for all.

*Please note that this resource does not offer any formal professional guidance to clergy or others who may be relating to LGBTQA+ people in a pastoral setting.*

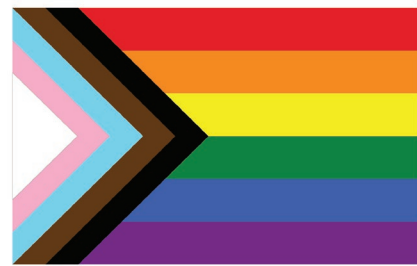
**Rev Lindsay Cullen,**

General Secretary (Interim) Uniting Church in Australia Assembly

**Rev Sharon Hollis,**

President, Uniting Church in Australia





## Biblical and theological perspectives

### The dignity of all people

Christian teaching on the dignity of the human person is founded on the understanding that all human beings are created in the image of a loving God (Genesis 1: 26-27). Christians see this witness in the life and ministry of Jesus and Jesus' ministry with those who are marginalised or rejected by society. In one of the earliest letters in the New Testament, the Apostle Paul wrote to Jesus' followers living in Galatia that "in Christ there is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female, for all of you are one in Christ Jesus". (Gal. 3:28)

A defining public declaration for the Uniting Church is the Statement to the Nation released at Church Union in 1977. It boldly asserts "the importance of every human being", pledging the church to "seek the correction of injustices wherever they occur", and "oppose all forms of discrimination which infringe basic rights and freedoms".<sup>i</sup>

In a comprehensive statement in 2006 on *Dignity in Humanity* the Uniting Church in Australia (UCA) national Assembly stated that:

*...the Uniting Church believes that very person is precious and entitled to live with dignity because they are God's children, and that each person's life and rights need to be protected or the human community (and its reflection of God) and all people are diminished.*<sup>ii</sup>

Reflection, study and engagement with LGBTIQA+ people on this fundamental understanding over the past 45 years has led the Uniting Church to welcome people without regard for sexual orientation or gender identity. In 2018 the national Assembly amended Church policy on marriage to recognise two understandings of marriage including permission to allow the marriage of any "two persons".<sup>iii</sup>

The Uniting Church's 2021 statement *Our Vision for a Just Australia* describes some of our most important aspirations for the time we are in. It speaks of a world where:

*We live together in a society where all are equal and free to exercise our rights equally, regardless of faith, cultural background, race, ability, age, sexual orientation and gender identity. We defend those rights for all.<sup>iv</sup> [And that] ... a person's sexual orientation and gender identity does not impact on their ability to live, work and contribute to society.<sup>v</sup>*

LGBTIQA+ people are included in this Christian vision of equality and freedom. It follows, therefore, that prayer and pastoral care offered by the Church seek to be life-affirming for all people. Efforts to change sexual orientation and gender identity run counter to this life-giving vision grounded in the teaching of Jesus due to the harms caused by these efforts. In the Gospel according to John, Jesus is the "good shepherd" declaring that "I came that they may have life and have it abundantly". (John 10:10)



## Pastoral perspectives

The important place of “prayer and pastoral care” in upholding people, including LGBTIQ+ people, was affirmed by decision of the Sixteenth Assembly as seen in the Introduction to this resource. The purpose of this section of the resources is to outline aspects of what that might mean in practical terms. As with respect for human dignity, prayer and pastoral care are universally affirmed by Christians but may mean different things in different contexts.

In the context of SOGICE, it is important to understand the difference between appropriate and harmful prayer and pastoral care. Appropriate care is healthy and affirming for LGBTQA+ persons, respecting their identities and orientations. Prayer and pastoral care are long held practices, integral to our faith as Christians. The (Australian) *SOGICE Survivor Statement* of 2022 delineates between these healthy, affirming practices and their misuse in ways which inflict harm on LGBTQA+ people by trying to change or ‘convert’ them.<sup>vi</sup> This misuse and the associated trauma can cause some to deeply mistrust what might otherwise be appropriate prayer and pastoral care. As a general principle pastoral care is always both a privilege and a responsibility.

Some references to professional guidance is found in the resources section including from the Christian Counsellors Association of Australia (CCAA) quoted below.

## Approaches to pastoral care

Christian pastoral care is a practice based in the teachings and ministry of Jesus and the Scriptures. There are key principles that generally guide Christian pastoral care. They are included here because, in one sense, pastoral care and support for SOGICE survivors is no different to pastoral care for any other person. (There are specific matters for SOGICE survivors, and they are referred to below.) The general principles include:

- **Love and Compassion:** exemplified by Jesus’ teachings to love one another as God has loved us. This calls for care, empathy, and support for individuals in need.
- **Theological basis:** pastoral care is based in Christian theology, emphasising the belief in God’s love, grace, and redemption.
- **Presence and Listening:** pastoral care involves active listening and empathetic presence with pastoral caregivers seeking to create a safe and nonjudgmental space where individuals feel heard, understood, and valued.
- **Prayer:** pastoral caregivers offer spiritual guidance, encouragement, and resources to help individuals deepen their relationship with God and find strength in their faith.
- **Respect diversity:** cultural sensitivity and respect for diverse backgrounds, beliefs, and experiences are essential for pastoral care, honouring the dignity and autonomy of each individual.

In addition to the above, good practice pastoral care respects confidentiality, builds trust over time, works with others, and refers to professionals where appropriate.

Regarding SOGICE survivors, and LGBTIQ+ people in general, the four-fold framework offered in Charles Gerkin’s *Introduction to Pastoral Care*<sup>vii</sup>, is a valuable way to think through the particular issues but in a wider church and cultural perspective. Gerkin’s framework covers:

- First, pastoral care is care of individuals and families. This is what is usually expected of pastoral care, but Gerkin includes three other areas.

- Second, Christian pastoral care is also care of the tradition that shapes Christian identity.
- Third, pastoral care is care of the overall cultural context, in which culture is broadly defined.
- Fourth, pastoral care is the care of the community of Christians. Gerkin summarises this perspective as follows: “The primary basis of care which the Christian community and its pastors offer to persons is the care that comes about by participation in the Christian community and its world of interpreted meanings”.<sup>viii</sup>

If seen in the above framework, care for LGBTIQ+ people and SOGICE survivors needs to be cognisant of the wider church and community context, including, for example, the impact of cultural and social attitudes and legislation. Most obviously, practices or teachings which are homophobic or transphobic are contrary to the fundamental principles outlined above. The Assembly statement clearly indicates that “Christian practices should not be used to harm or condemn any people including LGBTIQ+ people”.

Pastoral care with and for SOGICE survivors has a particular emphasis on lived experience. The importance of lived experience in Christian pastoral care is emphasised by Carrie Doehring in *The Practice of Pastoral Care*.<sup>ix</sup> Doehring describes the basic ingredients of a caregiving relationship, showing how to engage the caregiver’s life experience as a source of authority in a pastoral relationship. This source of authority is a general pastoral practice. Though it needs to be stressed even more when the caregiver is not closely aware of the situation of LGBTIQ+ people in general, and SOGICE survivors in particular.

In Australia, the Christian Counsellors Association has developed a section of their Code of Ethics which provides the Association’s policy on “Dealing with Human Diversity”. It is of assistance given that it includes reference to sexual orientation, though does not, at this stage, make reference to gender identity. The Code states that:

*CCAA recognizes that all people are created in the image of God and are therefore born free and equal in dignity and rights that we embrace the diversity of all humanity.*

*3.23 This means all people have an innate right to be valued and respected, to receive ethical care, and to be treated with the utmost dignity.*

*3.24 This means that counsellors view spirituality and religion, race ethnicity, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, disability, gender, and age, as important aspects of human diversity.<sup>x</sup>*

## Understanding the harm caused by SOGICE

A 2018 Australian report, *Preventing Harm, Promoting Justice – Responding to LGBT conversion therapy in Australia* reviewed the now extensive literature, and interviewed a number of survivors. The report highlights some key points from the individuals interviewed which is relevant to help inform affirming prayer and pastoral care.

- “Each person knew from an early age, that they were same-sex attracted or transgender;
- Faith and service to their respective faith communities was at the centre of their lives during the period they were subject to conversion and related therapies;
- Each person carried deep grief, and, in some cases anger, over being told they were ‘broken’ and needed fixing; and
- All have experienced a profound sense of loss at the lives they had taken away from them.”<sup>xi</sup>

As stated above it is important to understand the difference between appropriate and *harmful* prayer and pastoral care. The SOGICE Survivors report identify two risk factors to “distinguish pastoral care when it is being employed as a conversion practice – as opposed to a legitimate form of spiritual care or guidance”. They are:

*the person in a pastoral care role is in a position of authority or leadership, creating an imbalanced power dynamic; [and] the practices and pastoral care occur in a recurrent or semi-regular manner. Conversion practices can occur in a pastoral care relationship wherever pastoral care or spiritual guidance is offered, within formal religious gatherings, informal community groups such as clubs or support groups, as well school and university chaplaincy.*<sup>xii</sup>

## Awareness of legal issues

The difference between pastoral care as affirming or harmful alerts caregivers to be aware of the legal issues concerning SOGICE. Clergy or others providing pastoral care for LGBTIQ+ people need to be aware of the changing contexts, especially State and Territory laws which prohibit conversion and suppression practices. The laws vary in detail between the States and Territories.

The ACT, Queensland, Victoria and NSW have passed legislation banning conversion practices, and the other jurisdictions are actively considering the introduction of comparable legislation. It is also worth stressing that the relevant professional bodies need to be consulted for legal, ethical and medical information, rather than relying on frequently partial and ill-informed media reports including on social media. (For more information see the table in the appendix.)

## Listening to the experience of SOGICE survivors

As in all the Church’s social justice and community services ministry, it is imperative that we listen to, learn from, and walk alongside those for whom we are seeking to support and provide care. The *SOGICE Survivor Statement* is “written by survivors of the LGBTQA+ Conversion movement and their allies, and endorsed by a broad range of advocates, organisations and community groups”.<sup>xiii</sup>

The statement has two parts: discussion and recommendations. The first outlines the history of the LGBTQA+ conversion movement, the various practices of the movement, the ideology that underpins almost all LGBTQA+ conversion practices, and the rationale for the recommendations of survivors. The second part summarises recommendations for addressing the LGBTQA+ conversion movement, preventing further harm, and supporting survivors. The Statement is an excellent resource for all involved in providing pastoral care for LGBTQA+ people. It was endorsed by 25 community organisations including the Uniting Church LGBTQA+ Network.

## An affirming framework for safe pastoral care

A team of researchers and LGBTIQ+ community members, under the umbrella of the “Improving Spiritual Health Care for LGBTQA+ Australians Research Project”, have produced a number of important resources. One publication, *A Guide to Improving Safety in Pastoral Care with LGBTQA+ people*, provides guidelines for safer pastoral care.<sup>xiv</sup> The guidelines were produced for use by pastoral care workers and faith leaders from all religious or spiritual backgrounds, though they seem appropriate for Christian pastoral care workers committed to the dignity of all people and a life-affirming approach to diverse sexualities and gender identities.



There are seven guidelines outlined in the report:

- Recognise human diversity;
- Protect individual safety;
- Accept and affirm the person's sexual orientation and gender identity;
- Explore what is appropriate to the individual's needs;
- Support people, including issues such as a history of trauma, social relationships and safe coming out;
- Refer to professionals as required; and
- Reflect on matters such as lived experience, community views, tradition, and pastoral policy

The writers summarise their approach as follows:

*support them [LGBTQA+ people] to accept who they are, and not try to change or suppress their identity...explore the possibilities for safety, connection, belonging and self-expression within and consistent with the rules, traditions, and practices of their faith community...supporting them [when necessary] to find additional or alternative communities of belonging where their various parts can be valued and affirmed...referral to appropriate mental health professionals when that is needed.<sup>xv</sup>*

## **Case studies<sup>xvi</sup>**

Here are two stories from UCA members with lived experience of SOGICE:

### **“Olivia”**

Olivia (pseudonym) shared this story in their own words.

*Conversion practices makes you feel less than. The messages that are taught is that you are broken and damaged and disordered and that you are less than normal. I was taught these messages in my UCA youth group growing up. I was about 12 when a senior youth member came out as gay and then was removed from leadership in the children's ministry to prevent the risks associated with him interacting with children and then was publicly prayed over week after week at youth group until he stopped showing up. I thought I was a perfect Christian girl, I wasn't interested in boys, however I did ask too many questions about what happens if you wanted to kiss girls.*

*What happened next was my youth group leaders telling me that if I wanted to kiss girls, I would need to make a choice between being a Christian or being gay because it wasn't right and you couldn't be both. I loved the church and my faith was important to me so I picked God. In year 11, in youth small groups when talking about relationships, I was questioned why I was single and one of my youth friends suggested it was because I liked thinking about kissing girls. My leaders took me aside for mentoring conversations fortnightly where we talked about the brokenness in my life that caused me to think these broken and sinful things. I was told it was because I had grown up in situation of a split family with domestic and family violence and abuse that I didn't have a strong male view of love. These leaders were more concerned with my possible same sex attraction than the abuse and violence I was faced with.*

*In these mentoring conversations, I was told I needed to act more like a girl, I needed to wear dresses, and I needed to consider some of the eligible guys in the youth group. I pushed aside my questions about sexuality and jumped into youth leadership post high school. I was so fearful that one day I would be perceived as a danger to young people, because that's what I was told was a thing if I was gay. I led youth groups and ministry where young people would talk about their sexuality and I would tell them that they could*

only remain in the church if they suppressed their desires and didn't act on their feelings, because that was what I thought I had to say.

*I wrestled with the tension of my sexuality and identity for many years, but there came a point in my life, where I just couldn't live like this anymore. I needed to be honest to myself and discover for myself if I was broken or if the world was bigger than I thought. Theological study saved me in many ways. I began to realise I could enquire for myself the matters of faith and see where that fit. Conversion practices aren't just a particular theology or specific therapy, its most common in Australia in informal religious settings. That's where I experienced conversion practices, and it caused me to suppress who I was for a long time. There is still a small voice in my head that tells me that I'm broken and everything I am is disordered and disgusting, but the internalised homophobia is getting smaller as I'm beginning to own who I am and how I relate to God, the church, ministry, others and myself.*

## **“Lucy”**

Lucy (pseudonym) shared this story in their own words to the Social Justice Commission of the WA Synod

*In 2019 I attended a non-denominational Christian camp targeted at young adults in Perth. I was invited to contribute through my connection with the Uniting Church. One of the break-out sessions had a guest speaker talking about 'ministry to LGBTIQ people'. As a queer Christian I was interested in the content and being able to share my experience. I was shocked and disturbed to discover that the guest speaker was a proponent of gay conversion practices and ideology.*

*He claimed to be conducting a “ministry of love” for people on the fringes of society by going to queer bars and venues and befriending people he met. That might be fine except his motivation was to convince them that they should no longer be gay or to “support them out of the gay lifestyle”. He shared how he would engage with people under the guise of a “bible study” and then once he had established a connection and gained trust, would start to convince them of his views.*

*He said many disturbing things to give the impression that being gay and the “gay lifestyle” was sinful, harmful and unhealthy. I can't remember all of it but I wrote down some of his comments at the time which contained various inaccurate and hurtful generalisations and accusations. These included the suggestions that were either explicitly stated or clearly implied: that gay people do not want to be, and are unable to be, monogamous; that they are bad parents; that the poor mental health and high suicide rates among LGBTIQ people is a result of their bad “lifestyle”; that child abuse is linked to becoming LGBTIQ, etc.*

*He used his position of authority to share this misinformation that he claimed was based on fact and science, but he was unable to cite sources that were not widely (and rightly) discredited. I was deeply upset and offended by the way he spoke and his insinuation that my identity and sexuality was wrong, sinful and harmful.*

*I was also very concerned for other young people hearing this content. While the views he shared were incredibly hurtful and offensive, I have a background of affirming theology to rely on and a community of people to support me through this experience. Despite this, it did still greatly affect me. I worry for young people without that background and affirming community who would be hearing these words from a person of authority. I fear that people could take them to heart, believing his words to be true and believing that who they are is wrong. He claimed that he was “called by God to minister to gay people” and continued to claim his views were based on science and theology, which would be extremely damaging and difficult for a young person to hear and believe about themselves.*



## **SOGICE resources and websites**

### **Australian resources and websites relating to faith-based contexts:**

#### **SOGICE Survivors' Statement**

*A statement written by survivors of the LGBTQA+ Conversion movement and their allies, and endorsed by advocates, organisations and community groups that support, or are led by, LGBTIQ+ people of faith.*

[https://www.sogicesurvivors.com.au/?fbclid=IwAR3puDr--9tORTEu-wYu83K\\_phWAM4Hk9TsU9pMdbAyOC9ZCbdC\\_qvNRfUY](https://www.sogicesurvivors.com.au/?fbclid=IwAR3puDr--9tORTEu-wYu83K_phWAM4Hk9TsU9pMdbAyOC9ZCbdC_qvNRfUY)

#### **The Religious Experiences of LGBTQA+ Australians**

*This project is exploring a range of experiences with religion and faith for sexually and gender diverse Australians. Their website includes 'A Guide to Improving Safety in Pastoral Care with LGBTQA+ People', as well as links to several academic and non-academic publications.*

<https://lgbtqareligiousexperiences.org.au/>

#### **Preventing Harm, Promoting Justice: Responding to LGBT conversion therapy in Australia (2018)**

*"Preventing Harm, Promoting Justice: Responding to LGBT conversion therapy in Australia" reveals the voices and lived experiences of 15 LGBT people who have struggled to reconcile their sexuality and transgender identities with the beliefs and practices of their religious community. The report, a joint initiative of La Trobe University, the Human Rights Law Centre and Gay & Lesbian Health Victoria, provides a comprehensive history of the conversion movement in Australia, together with legal analysis and recommendations for reform.*

[https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/SexualOrientation/IESOGI/Academics/Equality\\_Australia\\_LGBTconversiontherapyinAustralia2.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/SexualOrientation/IESOGI/Academics/Equality_Australia_LGBTconversiontherapyinAustralia2.pdf)

#### **Healing Spiritual Harms: supporting recovery from LGBTQA+ change and suppression practices (2021)**

*This research report presents findings from a project conducted in partnership with the Brave Network, the Australian LGBTIQ+ Multicultural Council (AGMC) and the Victorian Government on recovery support needs of survivors of LGBTQA+ change and suppression (conversion) practices.*

[https://www.latrobe.edu.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0007/1201588/Healing-spiritual-harms-Supporting-recovery-from-LGBTQA-change-and-suppression-practices.pdf](https://www.latrobe.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/1201588/Healing-spiritual-harms-Supporting-recovery-from-LGBTQA-change-and-suppression-practices.pdf)

#### **Brave Network**

*Brave Network is a support and advocacy group for LGBTIQ people of faith and allies. Brave hosts monthly meetings in central Melbourne and supports LGBTIQ people of faith to tell their stories in media, churches and public events.*

The primary focus of Brave Network is ensuring the wellbeing of LGBTIQ people of faith, regardless of their faith journey. Brave Network is fully affirming of LGBTIQ inclusive theology and is both sex positive and faith positive.

This website contains several helpful resources and links to other related websites.

<https://thebravenetwork.org/>

### **Ambassadors and Bridge Builders International**

Anthony Venn Brown is a former Pentecostal preacher and a SOGICE survivor. There are a range of resources reflecting Anthony's work with survivors, reflecting his own particular Christian background and experience.

<https://www.abbi.org.au/conversion-therapy/download-ex-gay-reparative-conversion-therapy-authority/>

### **Queers Be With You**

Queers Be With You offers educational workshops and individual consultations to Churches and Christian organisations who want to be more LGBTQIA+ inclusive and who are wanting to consider the ways they might be better allies to the LGBTQIA+ community.

<https://www.queersbewithyou.com/>

### **Mental health and the church community (2017)**

A graphic about pastoral needs and how equipped leaders feel they are to respond

<https://www.aifc.com.au/equipped/>

### **International resources and websites relating to faith-based contexts:**

Church of Scotland – Diverse gender identities and pastoral care

<https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/resources/learn/publications/diverse-gender-identities-and-pastoral-care>

United Church of Canada

<https://united-church.ca/social-action/justice-initiatives/conversion-therapy>

United Church of Christ USA – A resolution to ban the practice of conversion therapy

[https://www.ucc.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/2021\\_TO\\_BAN\\_THE\\_PRACTICE\\_OF\\_CONVERSION\\_THERAPY.pdf](https://www.ucc.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/2021_TO_BAN_THE_PRACTICE_OF_CONVERSION_THERAPY.pdf)

United Reformed Church UK – Paper I4 Emergency resolution: Conversion therapy

[https://urc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Paper\\_I4\\_-\\_Conversion\\_Therapy-1.pdf](https://urc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Paper_I4_-_Conversion_Therapy-1.pdf)

*Methodist Church UK – Methodist Conference votes on banning of conversion therapy*

<https://www.methodist.org.uk/about-us/the-methodist-church/marriage-and-relationships/methodist-conference-votes-on-banning-of-conversion-therapy/>

*Methodist Church UK - Conversion Therapy Policy*

[https://www.methodist.org.uk/media/25049/mc22-50-methodist-church-conversion-policy\\_jrh-jb.pdf](https://www.methodist.org.uk/media/25049/mc22-50-methodist-church-conversion-policy_jrh-jb.pdf)

*Methodist Church UK - Safeguarding People who are LGBT+ in the Methodist Church - LGBT+ Safeguarding webinar (Zoom)*

<https://www.methodist.org.uk/safeguarding/safeguarding-webinars/lgbtplus-safeguarding-webinar/>

*Church of England UK - General Synod backs ban on conversion therapy*

<https://www.churchofengland.org/news-and-media/news-and-statements/general-synod-backs-ban-conversion-therapy>

*Church of England UK - Private member's motion – conversion therapy*

<https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-11/gs-2070a-conversion-therapy-a-note-from-ms-jayne-ozanne.pdf>

*Church of England UK - A note from the Secretary General*

[https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-11/1687943726\\_gs-2070b-conversion-therapy-a-note-from-the-secretary-general.pdf](https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-11/1687943726_gs-2070b-conversion-therapy-a-note-from-the-secretary-general.pdf)

NB: No applicable resources could be found for the following:

- Presbyterian Church USA
- Episcopal Church USA
- United Methodists of USA

## **Australian websites relating to general contexts:**

### **Real stories of change and suppression practices**

*From Victoria's Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission*

<https://www.humanrights.vic.gov.au/change-or-suppression-practices/change-or-suppression-stories/>

### **For families and friends**

*From Victoria's Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission*

*Some excellent information and a helpful resource.*

<https://www.humanrights.vic.gov.au/change-or-suppression-practices/for-families-and-friends/>

### **Sexuality and Gender Identity Conversion Practices**

*From the ACT's Human Rights Commission*

<https://www.hrc.act.gov.au/complaints/sexuality-and-gender-identity-conversion-practices>

### **States developing legislation as at February 2024**

[https://equalopportunity.tas.gov.au/\\_data/assets/word\\_doc/0008/608732/21.02.02-EOT-Submission-on-TLRI-Sexual-Orientation-and-Gender-Identity-Conversion-](https://equalopportunity.tas.gov.au/_data/assets/word_doc/0008/608732/21.02.02-EOT-Submission-on-TLRI-Sexual-Orientation-and-Gender-Identity-Conversion-)

**General information about LGBTIQ+ discrimination and rights**

<https://www.qhrc.qld.gov.au/your-rights/for-lgbtq-people>

<https://antidiscrimination.nsw.gov.au/anti-discrimination-nsw/discrimination/types-of-discrimination.html>

<https://www.humanrights.vic.gov.au/hub/lgbtiq-rights/>

[https://equalopportunity.tas.gov.au/discrimination/unlawful\\_discrimination](https://equalopportunity.tas.gov.au/discrimination/unlawful_discrimination)

<https://www.equalopportunity.sa.gov.au/discrimination/types-of-discrimination/grounds-for-discrimination>

<https://www.wa.gov.au/organisation/equal-opportunity-commission/about-the-equal-opportunity-commission>

<https://adc.nt.gov.au/discrimination>

<https://www.hrc.act.gov.au/lgbtiq-rights>

**For a multi-cultural, multi-faith perspective:**

**Australian GLBTIQ Multicultural Council**

*AGMC is the national peak body for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersex, queer individuals and community groups of multicultural and multifaith backgrounds.*

<https://www.agmc.org.au/>

**Living and Loving in Diversity**

*Sad and funny, sexy and sensitive, angry and insightful: the deeply personal stories in this book reflect a rainbow of experiences and emotions, as diverse as the storytellers themselves.*

*Join chief editor Maria Pallotta-Chiarolli and the Australian LGBTIQ Multicultural Council for a journey of discovery through queer multicultural multifaith Australia, with more than sixty voices from across the spectrum of sexualities and genders, families and relationships.*

<https://www.wakefieldpress.com.au/product.php?productid=1473>

Each letter in 'L.G.B.T.I.Q.A.+' contains a diverse range of real people, living real lives. LGBTIQ+ people can be found in all walks of life, professions, faith communities, and locations throughout Australia. There are many 'LGBTIQ+ communities' (plural) – there is no single LGBTIQ+ community.

'LGBTIQ+' is used in the broadest possible way. There are limits using LGBTIQ+ when attempting to speak about the full breadth of people's bodies, genders, relationships, sexualities, and lived experiences.

**Lesbian:** A lesbian is a person who self-describes as a woman and who has experiences of romantic, sexual, and/or affectional attraction solely or primarily to other people who self-describe as women. Some women use other language to describe their relationships and attractions.

**Gay:** A gay man is a person who self-describes as a man and who has experiences of romantic, sexual and/or affectional attraction solely or primarily to other people who self-describe as men. Some men use other language to describe their relationships and attractions.

**Bisexual:** A bisexual person is a person of any gender who has romantic and/or sexual relationships with and/or is attracted to people from more than one gender. Some people who fit this description prefer the terms 'queer' or 'pansexual', in recognition of more than two genders. Although 'bi-' technically refers to two, it is often used by people who have relationships with and/or attractions for people of more genders than just women or men.

**Trans and Transgender:** These are umbrella terms often used to describe people who were assigned a sex at birth that they do not feel reflects how they understand their gender identity, expression, or behaviour. Most people of trans experience live and identify simply as women or men; most do not have 'a trans identity'. In addition to women and men of trans experience, some people do identify their gender as trans or as a gender other than woman or man. The phrase 'trans and gender diverse people' is often used. People from Aboriginal/Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander communities often use sistergirl or brotherboy. People from societies around the world with more than two traditional genders often use culturally specific language.

**Intersex:** A person with an intersex characteristic is a person born with physical characteristics that differ from modern medical norms about strictly 'female' and strictly 'male' bodies. Intersex is not about gender, but about innate physical variations. Most people with intersex characteristics describe their gender as simple women or men, not as a 'third gender'. In this resource, guided by the principles in the SOGICE Survivors statement, we have left out the Intersex community (I) when referring to harmful conversion practises and ideology. Although Intersex people have been affected by the sexual orientation and gender identity change efforts, "medical and surgical interventions that contravene the rights and bodily autonomy of intersex infants, children and adults are not generally labelled as conversion practices in SOGICE advocacy globally."

**Queer:** This has evolved as an umbrella term for sexual and gender minorities who are not heterosexual or are not cisgender.

**Asexual:** a lack of sexual attraction; an asexual is someone who is not sexually attracted to anyone. Such people may not wish to be categorised.

**+:** Those seeking to be recognised as valued without subscribing to binary ways of understanding sexuality and gender.

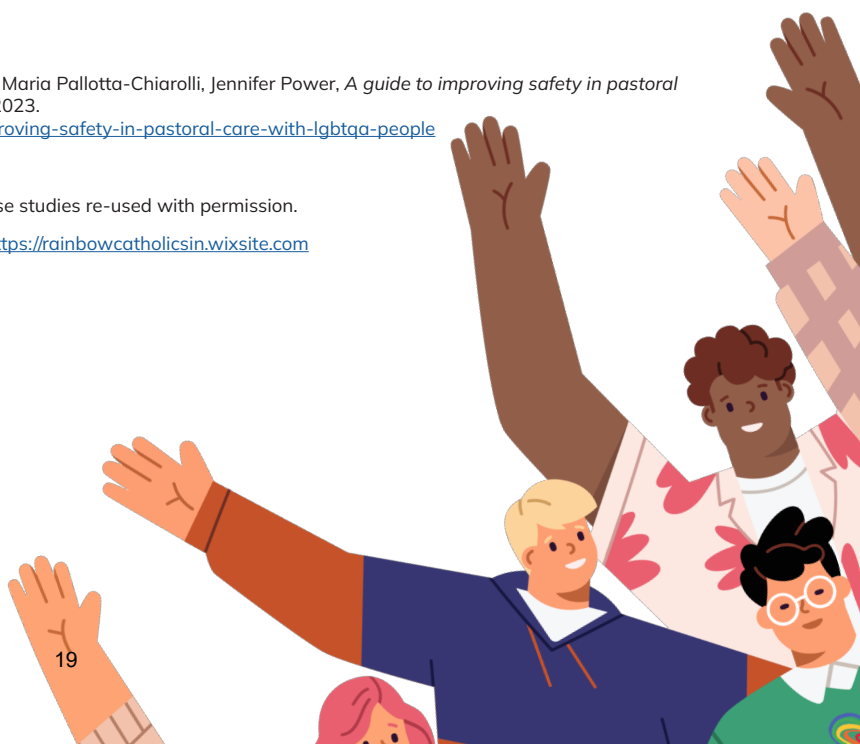
## APPENDIX – State breakdown

	Legislation	Legislation breakdown	Training and groups
QLD	<a href="#">Link</a>	Health care providers Are prohibited from performing conversion practices, punishable by a fine or 18 months prison. The prohibition does not apply to religious or spiritual practices that do not involve the provision of health services. However, it is intended that prohibiting conversion practices in a health context will send a clear signal to all members of the community, including religious and spiritual communities, that these practices are unacceptable.	
ACT	<a href="#">Link</a>	Health care professionals are prohibited from; 1. Performing Conversion practises on a protected person (a minor or impaired person) 2. Remove a protected person from ACT for the purpose of undergoing conversion practices.	
NSW	<a href="#">Link</a>	<a href="#">Legislation Link</a>	
VIC	<a href="#">Link</a>	<p>Stated as Gold Star legislation.</p> <p>The Act includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a broad definition of change or suppression practices</li> <li>civil (non-criminal) options for preventing and responding to change or suppression practices</li> <li>four new criminal offences for practices that cause injury or serious injury</li> </ul> <p>* injury: physical injury or harm to mental health, whether temporary or permanent</p> <p>* serious injury: an injury (including the cumulative effect of more than one injury) that endangers life or is substantial and protracted</p> <p>* taking someone outside Victoria for a change or suppression practice that causes injury</p> <p>* advertising a change or suppression practice.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The criminal offences will be overseen by Victoria Police. The Commission may also bring proceedings for the offence of advertising a change or suppression practice.</li> </ul>	<p><a href="#">Link</a></p> <p>Change and Suppression (Conversion) Practices Prohibition Act 2021 (on behalf of the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission)</p> <p><a href="#">Change-or-suppression-practices/about-the-csp-ac</a></p>
TAS	<p>Public consultation just finished on draft bill.</p> <p><a href="#">Link</a></p>	Proposed bill is similar to the Victorian Legislation.	

<b>SA</b>	Labor promise on legislation by end of 2024 – no current legislation being drafted <a href="#">Link</a>		
<b>NT</b>	Nothing listed		
<b>WA</b>	Commitment made in 2022 to ban the practices – no current legislation drafted.		<a href="#">Conversion Practices WA</a>  <a href="#">Form</a>

## Endnote

- <sup>i</sup> Elenie Poulos and Cynthia Coghill, *For a World Reconciled*, Sydney, (Uniting Church Press), 2014, page 7.
- <sup>ii</sup> *For a World Reconciled*, page 127.
- <sup>iii</sup> Uniting Church in Australia, 15<sup>th</sup> Assembly, 2018, Minutes and Papers. [www.uniting.church](http://www.uniting.church)
- <sup>iv</sup> Uniting Church Assembly, *Our Vision for a Just Australia*, 7.
- <sup>v</sup> *Our Vision*, page 27.
- <sup>vi</sup> SOGICE Survivors, *Calling for action on The LGBTQA+ conversion movement: Statement, discussion and recommendations*, (undated) <http://sogicesurvivors.com.au/> pages 5-9.
- <sup>vii</sup> Charles V. Gerkin, *Introduction to Pastoral Care*, Nashville, (Abingdon Press), 1997.
- <sup>viii</sup> Charles V. Gerkin, *Introduction to Pastoral Care*, page 19.
- <sup>ix</sup> Carrie Doehring, *The Practice of Pastoral Care: A Postmodern Approach*, Revised and Expanded Edition, Louisville, (Westminster John Knox Press), 2015.
- <sup>x</sup> Christian Counsellors Association of Australia, *Code of Ethics*, 2020, pages 8,9.
- <sup>xi</sup> *Preventing Harm, Promoting Justice – Responding to LGBT conversion therapy in Australia*, page 21.
- <sup>xii</sup> SOGICE Survivors, pages 7, 8.
- <sup>xiii</sup> SOGICE Survivors, page 4.
- <sup>xiv</sup> Timothy Jones, Nathan Despott, Tiffany Jones, Joel Anderson, Maria Pallotta-Chiarolli, Jennifer Power, *A guide to improving safety in pastoral care with LGBTQA+ people*, Macquarie School of Education, 2023. <https://researchers.mq.edu.au/en/publications/a-guide-to-improving-safety-in-pastoral-care-with-lgbtqa-people>
- <sup>xv</sup> *A guide to improving safety*, page 10.
- <sup>xvi</sup> Uniting Church in Australia, 16th Assembly papers, 2022. Case studies re-used with permission.
- <sup>xvii</sup> Adapted from Rainbow Catholics interAgency for Ministry, <https://rainbowcatholicsin.wixsite.com>





**Uniting Church in Australia**