

Supporting Victoria's Bill to Ban Conversion Practices

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Wednesday 25 November 2020 - Thorne Harbour Health has announced its support of the Victorian Government's *Change and Suppression (Conversion) Practices Prohibition Bill* introduced today as it seeks to protect adults and children from harmful practices that attempt to change or suppress a person's sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.

The Victorian Government undertook an extensive process in the development of the bill including an inquiry, significant research and meaningful consultation with survivor-advocates. The resulting bill is of an incredibly high standard, surpassing any similar legislation developed in Australia to date.

"By passing this legislation, Victoria has a chance to lead the way globally in protecting the human rights of our sexually and gender diverse communities from incredibly harmful practices based on false and misleading claims," said Thorne Harbour Health CEO Simon Ruth.

The bill seeks to establish a range of civil and criminal penalties and ban practices in formal settings (for example medical, psychology or counselling services) as well as informal settings such as religious settings. It would also prohibit advertising or promotion of paid or unpaid conversion practices as well referrals to conversation practices. If passed, the bill would also provide investigative powers to the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission.

"Difference is not a defect. LGBTQA+ people are not 'broken' or 'disordered'. It is vital that we stop so-called practitioners, whether in informal or formal settings, from performing practices that traumatise participants," added Simon Ruth.

"This bill is informed by the lived experience of survivors of sexual orientation and gender identity change efforts, and seeks to end these practices which are harmful and grounded in unscientific claims," says Rebecca Baxter, a steering committee member of Brave Network, a support and advocacy group for survivors of conversion practices.

The suite of changes is accompanied by a range of support initiatives for survivors, with investigations initiated into potential conversion practices to employ strategies that prevent re-traumatisation.

Thorne Harbour Health is encouraging everyone to show their support for the Government's *Change and Suppression (Conversion) Practices Prohibition Bill* by contacting their local MP. The organisation is also inviting community members to attend their upcoming Community Briefing on Monday 30 November from 6PM. More details for this free event can be found online at:

<https://thorneharbour.org/news-events/calendar-events/community-briefing-conversion-practices-bill/>

ENDS

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