

BREAKING THE SILENCE: A GROUNDBREAKING LOOK AT CONVERSION PRACTICES IN AUSTRALIA



CARE
ECONOMICS,
SOCIAL AND
POLICY



Project title:	Improving spiritual health care for LGBTQA+ Australians
Investigators:	Dr Timothy Jones, Prof. Jennifer Power, Dr Joel Anderson, Prof. Tiffany Jones
Timeline:	June 2019 to June 2025
Location:	National
Partners:	The Brave Network, Australian LGBTIQ+ Multicultural Council, Macquarie University



CONTEXT

This pioneering study on the harms of conversion practices in Australia was driven by survivors who sought to create an evidence base to support their advocacy for law reform and social change. The prevalence of conversion practices in Australia is much higher than anticipated, with 8% of the LGBTQA+ community having undergone formal conversion practices, and 45% experiencing informal practices 'frequently' or 'often'. These conversion practices are linked to serious health impacts, including complex post-traumatic stress disorder, spiritual conflict, self-harm, and suicide, while training and resources to support survivors have historically been scarce.



APPROACH

The research aims to raise awareness of conversion practices in order to support legal reforms to end them, as well as enhance survivor recovery, and improve safety in pastoral care. The research took form in the shape of a major national survey and over fifty life history interviews with survivors of conversion practices. It constitutes the most significant dataset on queer and trans experiences of conversion practices in this country. Findings from the research have informed the creation of training programs for mental health professionals and led to the development of *A Guide to Improving Safety in Pastoral Care with LGBTQA+ People (2023)*, which helps those in religious ministries provide safer care for LGBTQA+ individuals.



OUTCOMES

The high levels reported by participants are evidence of the persistence of, and harms associated with, conversion practices. This research has led to a swathe of law reform processes in all Australian jurisdictions, with legislation passed in Queensland, New South Wales, South Australia, and the Australian Capital Territory similar to the "Change or Suppression (Conversion) Practices Prohibition Act 2021" in Victoria. The community education resources, and professional training developed from this research have led to the team working with the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission to extend their education and training materials.

"La Trobe University's contribution has not only been foundational for our world-leading legislation, in providing evidence of the practices and the harm they cause, but also vital in underpinning the civil response scheme at the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (VEOHRC)."

Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commissioner



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