



welcoming LGBTIQ people, same-sex couples and families,  
in all areas of the Church's life, ministry and leadership

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### **Uniting Network welcomes Victorian Conversion Practices Prohibition Bill**

Uniting Network, the Uniting Church's LGBTIQ Network welcomes the proposed legislation in Victoria titled the 'Change and Suppression (conversion) Practices Prohibition bill' and urges particularly Victorian Uniting Network members to show their support for this bill by writing to local MPs in support for this legislation.

Jason Masters, Co-Convenor comments, "Uniting Network welcomes this long-awaited bill and as partners of the Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Change Efforts (SOGICE) Survivors Statement, we know it will make an important difference in the lives of many LGBTQ+<sup>1</sup> people. We call on other states to follow this example so there is national protection for LGBTQ+ people."

The SOGICE Survivors Network asserts that conversion practices are far more prevalent in Australian faith communities than has previously been understood, particularly when including informal conversion practices that occur in pastoral care contexts.

Uniting Network believes that this bill moves towards the protection of LGBTQ+ individuals from harmful practices which occur in both formal settings but also in informal practices of pastoral care, prayer ministries and small groups. In preparation for this bill, there has been careful work to hear the stories and experiences of both survivors of conversion practices and religious leaders.

Nicole Mugford the Victorian representative on the Uniting Network Executive says "This bill is such a vital piece of legislation for LGBTQ+ people. It acknowledges the harm caused by both formal and informal conversion practices and the underpinning false and misleading claims and causes that are harmful and

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<sup>1</sup> Please note, that religious LGBTQ+ change and suppression practices have not included forced medical interventions on people born with intersex variations. Hence the focus on "LGBTQ+" but not "I" practices. Although, of course, some intersex people are LGBTQ+ and have been subject to religious LGBTQ+ change and suppression practices.

unscientific. LGBTQ+ people including LGBTQ+ people of faith should be free to practice their faith, live their life and participate in all aspects of society, without being treated as if they are 'disordered' or 'broken'."

We are very concerned that many conservative Christian groups will campaign against this vital piece of legislation claiming it represents and attack on religious freedom and also adults rights to seek religious counsel. Uniting Network know that many LGBTQ+ people have subject themselves to both formal and informal conversion practices in the past because they are striving to be accepted by the communities they grew up in, when those same communities reject their natural sexual orientation and gender identity which cannot be changed and therefore ultimately reject LGBTIQ+ people. What we know is that God loves all people, as they are. Conversion Practices in any form is abusive and leads at best to long term mental health issues, at worst suicide.

Rev Leanne Jensi & Jason Masters (Co-Convenors)

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