

Submission on Conversion Practices Prohibition Legislation Bill

HE MIHI

*“Ko te hua ia o te Wairua,
he aroha,
he hari,
he rangimārie,
he manawanui,
he ngāwari,
he ngākau pai,
he whakapono,
he ngākau māhaki,
he ngākau kua tāea te pēhi:
kāhore he ture e riria ai ēnei mea.”*

Ngā Karatia 5:22-23

Tuatahi ake ka whakamoemitia te Atua mō ana hanga pai. Tuarua ake e rere kau ana te mihi ki a koutou e rau rangatira mā i runga nei i ngā tini ahuatanga o te wā. Tangihia o tātau tini mate. Tuia rātou ki a rātou i runga i te rangimārie. Mauria ora ki a tātau o rātou waihotanga ki muri nei i runga i te Ingoa a Karaiti Ihu. Tuia tātau ki a tātau i runga i te arohanui.

Submission on Conversion Practices Prohibition Legislation Bill

A submission from the two Aotearoa-New Zealand-based Archbishops of the Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia

We support this Bill

We welcome the opportunity to submit on this Bill and make the following comments and recommendations. We also welcome the opportunity to speak to our submission.

Summary

We believe that human sexuality is a gift of God to be cherished and honoured. It is an intrinsic part of who we are as human beings, and an expression of God’s glorious diversity in creation. Anything which seeks to suggest that there is something inherently wrong or sinful in those who are takatāpui and LGBTQI+ or which seeks to change or suppress a person’s sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression; is, we believe, wrong.

We acknowledge, with sadness, that certain religious teachings have often caused and continue to cause deep pain and offense to takatāpui and LGBTQI+ New Zealanders. We acknowledge, with profound regret, that some of these teachings have created and continue to create oppressive systems that fuel intolerance, perpetuate injustice, and result in violence and abuse. We ask for forgiveness from those whose lives have been damaged and destroyed on the pretext of religious teaching.

We believe that any religious teaching which seeks to change or suppress a person’s sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression against their will is both abusive and damaging.

Abuse in any form is incompatible with the love of God and completely unacceptable within the Church. It violates our sacred belief that all people are made in the image of God, are loved by God, and deserve to be treated with dignity and respect.

We are committed to ensuring that abuse in all its forms is eradicated from our communities and whole-heartedly support the New Zealand Government's objectives in prohibiting conversion therapy, thereby offering protection to the takatāpui and LGBTQI+ people of Aotearoa from this abusive and damaging practice.

Submission points

1. The New Zealand Government has a moral and legal obligation to the care and protection for all New Zealanders, and this includes our LGBTQI+ community.
2. As an employer we have a legal and moral commitment to provide for the wellbeing and care for all in our employment, and provide a safe space for all to fully be themselves without fear or prejudice. This mandates our commitment to inclusion and celebrating all of creation. We see conversion therapy as undermining this commitment.
3. We see the immense harm that has historically been felt by the LGBTQI+ community globally and in Aotearoa. We see that prejudice and harm continue at present and is experienced in families, workplaces, communities, institutions and churches. The legal provision of conversion therapy continues to normalise the idea that some sexual orientations, gender identities or gender expressions are not normal, and are something that should be changed or fixed.
4. All people are created in the image of God. Conversion therapy is an act of violence against a person created in God's image. Evidence speaks to the dangerous, lifelong traumatic impact that conversion therapy can have on individuals and families. For this reason we support this Bill.
5. We do not consider that this Bill impacts upon the ability of the Christian community to continue to promote the teachings of peace, love, and justice that are foundational to our Christian faith. Expressions of faith that seek to change people against their will through manipulation, coercion or even force are in our view a complete departure from the teachings of Christ. For this reason, we oppose any exemptions to be granted for churches or faith communities in the prohibition of conversion practices.
6. We recognise the diversity of takatāpui and other expressions of gender and orientation as unique offerings from mātauranga Māori and its Pacific roots. We see that measures to erase these, including conversion therapy, are acts of colonisation. Therefore, we support this Bill as an act of decolonisation.

Further recommendations

1. Extend the meaning of conversion practices to protect intersex people.
2. Ensure there is adequate support for survivors of conversion practices through ACC legislation.
3. Conversion practices should be added to the list of acts entitling cover for mental injury in schedule 3 of the Accident Compensation Act 2001.
4. Remove the age distinction to ensure people of all ages are protected – including those over the age of 18.
5. Amend the *Mens Rea* requirement for Section 8.
6. Remove the requirement for consent from the Attorney General to prosecute.

The Most Reverend Philip Richardson

Tikanga Pākehā - Archbishop and Primate/ Te Pīhopa Mātāmua, Senior Bishop for the seven tikanga Pākehā Dioceses, and Bishop of Waikato and Taranaki.

The Most Reverend Don Tamihere

Tikanga Māori - Archbishop and Primate/ Te Pīhopa Mātāmua, Te Pīhopa o Aotearoa/ Senior Bishop for the five Tikanga Māori Hui Amorangi (regional bishoprics), and Bishop/Te Pīhopa o Te Tairāwhiti.