

Members of the Tasmanian Parliament
Parliament House, Hobart

Dear Honourable Member

Re: Conversion Practices Prohibition Bill 2026

I write on behalf of the Tasmanian Council of Social Service (TasCOSS) to express our strong support for the *Conversion Practices Prohibition Bill 2026* and to urge you to support this important legislative reform.

TasCOSS is the peak body for the community services industry in Tasmania and advocates for immediate and long-term solutions that eliminate poverty and improve economic and social outcomes for all Tasmanians. Our work is underpinned by our values of respect, equity, dignity, inclusion, Aboriginal self-determination and intergenerational wellbeing.

TasCOSS believes every Tasmanian deserves to live free from discrimination, coercion and practices that undermine their dignity, safety and wellbeing. Conversion practices, which seek to change or suppress a person's sexual orientation or gender identity, are harmful, discriminatory and unsupported by credible medical evidence.

TasCOSS has previously supported the recommendations of the Tasmanian Law Reform Institute (TLRI) concerning conversion practices. We remain firmly of the view that comprehensive legislative reform is necessary to protect LGBTIQ+ Tasmanians from harm and uphold their fundamental human rights.

Conversion practices are occurring in Tasmania and cause significant harm

Evidence demonstrates that conversion practices are not simply a historical concern. Research involving LGBTIQ+ Tasmanians found around one-in-twenty respondents had experienced formal conversion practices, while 97% reported exposure to messages suggesting their sexual orientation or gender identity needed to be changed or suppressed.¹

The impacts of these practices can be profound and long-lasting. Research and survivor experiences demonstrate serious psychological harm, including increased risks of mental health distress, trauma and suicidality.

¹ Dwyer, A et al. (2021), *LGBTQIA+ Tasmanians: Telling Us the Story*, Tasmanian Government and University of Tasmania, Australia.

Conversion practices are based on discredited assumptions that sexual orientation or gender identity can or should be changed. They are not legitimate therapeutic interventions and have been rejected by relevant professional health bodies.

Legislation must provide meaningful protection

The TLRI's 2022 report established a clear case for legislative reform in Tasmania. It identified the continued occurrence of conversion practices and the inadequacy of existing legal protections.²

TasCOSS supports a comprehensive legislative approach that responds to how conversion practices occur in practice, including both attempts to change and suppress a person's sexual orientation or gender identity. Caveats or carve-outs – such as for suppression practices, particular groups of people or significant forms of harmful conduct – risk leaving Tasmanians without meaningful protection.

We particularly recognise the importance of education and prevention measures, alongside appropriate civil and criminal protections. The proposed new role of the Conversion Practices Commissioner in coordinating education, prevention and responses to conversion practices is an important element of the Bill.

Protecting human rights while respecting individual freedoms

TasCOSS acknowledges that some members of the community have raised concerns about the potential implications of legislation for religious freedom, parental rights and health care.

These concerns deserve respectful consideration. However, they do not justify allowing harmful conversion practices to continue. TasCOSS considers the Bill both protects freedom of belief and expression, while ensuring all Tasmanians are protected from harmful and discriminatory conduct.

The proposed reforms distinguish between conversion practices and the legitimate expression of religious beliefs, parental guidance and health care provided in accordance with established professional standards.

The Bill is not intended to prevent respectful conversations about sexuality or gender identity, nor to restrict people from seeking appropriate professional counselling and support. Rather, its

² Tasmania Law Reform Institute (2022), *Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Conversion Practices*, Final Report No.32, University of Tasmania, Australia.

purpose is to prevent practices that seek to change or suppress a person's identity through interventions that are harmful and lack a legitimate therapeutic basis.

An opportunity to deliver lasting reform

Tasmania has an opportunity to learn from the experiences of other Australian jurisdictions and introduce legislation that provides effective and enduring protections.

The experiences of Tasmanians who have been subjected to conversion practices reinforce the need for legislation that is comprehensive, trauma-informed and focussed on preventing harm before it occurs.

TasCOSS' commitment to social justice, equality and inclusion underpins our support for this reform. We support a comprehensive ban on conversion practices in Tasmania because these practices are harmful, discriminatory and unsupported by medical evidence. Banning conversion practices is an important step towards a safer, fairer and more inclusive Tasmania.

I urge you to support the *Conversion Practices Prohibition Bill 2026* and ensure Tasmania adopts strong, comprehensive and effective protections against conversion practices.

Thank you for considering our position.

Yours sincerely



Paula Wriedt
Chief Executive Officer

26 October 2026