

CONVERSION PRACTICES

**893. Hon ALISON XAMON to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Mental Health:**

I refer to dangerous conversion practices, which attempt to change a person's sexuality or gender identity, and which, according to a 2018 La Trobe University report, are practised throughout Australia.

- (1) Has the WA government undertaken any work to determine the extent of conversion practices in Western Australia?
- (2) If yes to (1), please table this work?
- (3) If no to (1), why not?
- (4) If no to (2), why not?
- (5) Will the government commit to banning conversion practices more broadly, including those that occur in religious and informal settings?
- (6) If no to (5), why not?

**Hon ALANNA CLOHESY replied:**

- (1)–(6) The government is opposed to and does not support the use of gay conversion therapy. The Australian Medical Association, the Royal College of Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists and the Royal Australasian College of Physicians all oppose psychological practices that attempt to change sexual orientation. Psychiatrists or psychologists who engage in practices that attempt to change sexual orientation may be in breach of their professional code of conduct and ethics, and individuals who have experienced this should consider reporting them to either the Health and Disability Services Complaints Office or the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency.

It is acknowledged that counselling sectors are currently unregulated in WA. The WA government supports the introduction of the national code of conduct for unregulated healthcare workers. This legislation is being drafted and once implemented will protect the public by setting minimum standards of conduct and practice for public and private healthcare workers. Practices that attempt to change sexual orientation may be in breach of the national code. Once implemented the national code will provide the director of HADSCO with powers to issue prohibition orders to healthcare workers when their continued practice presents a risk to public health and safety.

The Mental Health Commission's feedback on the Victorian report on the inquiry into gay conversion therapy indicates that there is benefit in providing counselling services for survivors of gay conversion therapy, together with legislation to prohibit such practices. The Victorian government committed to prohibiting gay conversion therapy as standalone legislation in February 2019, but these laws are not yet in place. Separate legislation, similar to Victoria's, could be considered in the future if the national code of conduct was not effective in preventing gay conversion therapy. With respect to support services, the Mental Health Commission currently funds a range of services that support the LGBTI community, totalling \$2 108 792.