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Dear Community Members

Summary of Key Concerns Regarding the Change or Suppression (Conversion) Practices Prohibition Bill 2020

Removal of religious freedom on matters of sexuality and gender identity, and enforced contentious ideological gender and sexuality identity constructions:

The Conversion and Suppression Bill 2020 will take away the right to religious freedom on issues of sexuality and gender identity.

The bill changes previous legal definitions of "gender" and "sexuality" and replaces them with far left, contentious ideological constructions of sexuality and gender. The bill forces the adoption of these identity constructs on all Victorians including religious communities such as the Muslim community. Mainstream Muslims oppose these constructs as they go against mainstream Islamic teachings on gender and sexuality. The bill forces the adoption of these contentious identity constructs and definitions on same sex attracted and gender dysphoric Victorians who do not identify with or accept these definitions.

Criminalising speech and talk counselling/therapy to individuals experiencing same sex attractions and gender dysphoria:

The bill enforces a blanket ban on vaguely defined "change or suppression practices" which expressly includes consensual religious practices, including prayer for an individual and the provision of Islamic advice on the personal situations of same sex attracted and gender dysphoric individuals.

The bill creates severe criminal offences and hefty fines for individuals and businesses. These offences include up to 10-year jail sentences and maximum fines of close to \$10,000 for individuals and a minimum of \$49,566 to \$991,320 for body corporate (businesses). Any Victorian including community leaders, teachers, parents, religious figures, counsellors and medical professionals could be criminalised if complaints are made about any form of advice provided to an individual which might be considered Conversion or Suppression. This can include advice to an individual to abide by mainstream Islamic constructs of gender and sexuality, consensual prayer for an individual, or conversations that do not affirm the imposed gender and identity constructs in the bill. Complaints can also be made by anonymous individuals. This makes it much more difficult to defend against any claims made.

Mosques, Muslim parents and families, religious organisations, Islamic schools and other individuals will face scrutiny, investigation, significant jail terms and large fines for exercising their religious duty to advise and guide same sex attracted Muslim individuals that acting on same sex attractions is a sin that needs to be avoided. This applies if Victorians refer the same sex attracted or gender dysphoric individuals to online material or to people outside of the state of Victoria who promote these messages. Muslims have a duty to provide ethical forms of support to individuals who request support to maintain adherence to religious constructs of sexuality and gender. Muslims including same sex attracted Muslims will be prohibited from this essential element of their faith.

Stripping adults of their ability to consent and to obtain support to adhere to Islamically sanctioned sexuality and gender constructs. Harming same sex attracted and gender dysphoric Victorians who do not identify with the enforced sexuality and gender constructs of the bill:

The bill strips same sex attracted adults of their rights to consent to obtaining ethical forms of counselling, therapy, religious/spiritual pastoral assistance or any other form of formal and informal guidance to support them live in accordance with their faith.

The bill enforces a contentious ideologically driven construct of gender and sexuality which same sex attracted and gender dysphoric Victorians may not identify with or wish to adopt. This will likely cause great distress and mental harm to those individuals because it forces this unwanted construct onto them and strips them of any legal rights to obtain comfort and assistance with a counsellor or religious body which do not reinforce those unwanted constructs.

Criminalises parental conversations with their children and criminalises the capacity for parents to obtain ethical counselling or religious pastoral care for their children:

The bill criminalises the ability of parents and families to have conversations about sexuality which do not affirm a child's same sex attraction or gender dysphoria as their identity, deeming these conversations “family violence”. Muslim parents must affirm their children as having a gay or transgender identity and refer to their children in this way or they may be deemed to be committing family violence. The bill criminalises the religious right of parents to advise their children to abstain from physical relationships with a member of the same sex. The bill strips the religious rights of parents to ethically advise their gender dysphoric children to adhere to religiously mandated gender norms. The bill criminalises any effort by the parents to seek and obtain ethical formal or informal assistance religious or otherwise to provide non-affirming counselling or advice to their children experiencing same sex attractions or gender dysphoria. This applies if parents refer their same sex attracted or gender dysphoric children to online material or to people outside of the state of Victoria who promote these messages.

Entrenching governmental systems of harassment and overreach into religious communities. Systemically entrenching contentious ideological gender and sexuality identity politics onto religious communities and same sex attracted and gender dysphoric individuals who don't identify with the imposed constructs:

The bill extends the role of the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (Commission) and grants it broad powers to investigate, censure, harass and punish those who provide advice on the Islamic position on sexuality and gender. It allows the Commission to produce and distribute material on sexuality and gender identity that is ideologically contentious and unrepresentative of the diversity of the LGBTIQ community, especially people who have same sex attractions and gender dysphoria who don't wish to adopt these identity constructions.

Socially harmful and socially tone deaf- constructing LGBTIQ individuals into objects of legal liability within their communities and families:

The bill does not consider the harmful side effects of constructing LGBTIQ individuals into objects of legal liability within their communities and families or the impacts that this may have on them and those they love. The bill does not consider how this may harm LGBTIQ individuals who may experience greater tensions and potentially an acceleration of family breakdown. This bill does not consider that it strips same sex attracted and gender dysphoric Victorians who do not adhere to the imposed sexuality and gender constructs of their humanity and their right to be autonomous individuals with multidimensional identities and social and religious ties.