



Submission of the Social Justice Unit of the Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Aotearoa, to the Health Committee on the Conversion Practices Prohibition Bill 56-1

This submission has been prepared to demonstrate the **strong support** of the Social Justice Unit of the Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia for the objectives and content of the Conversion Practices Prohibition Bill. We are an organisational ally of the queer or LGBTQIA+ community and submit that no religious doctrine or secular ideology should condone the abuse and attempted erasure of queer identities (including sexualities, gender identities, gender expressions, and intersex peoples). The conversion practices currently operating in Aotearoa New Zealand are not backed by any credible research and continue to enable discrimination and discriminatory ideologies.

The Social Justice Unit of the Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia (SJU) believe that every person, including those who are takatāpui and LGBTQI+ are a precious and valued part of creation and a part of the natural order.

We believe that every person is created in God's image and is of infinite worth and equal value. This belief exists regardless of a person's race, ethnicity, gender, or sexuality.

We believe that all people, including those who are takatāpui and LGBTQI+ should be able to live their lives free from any form of persecution, violence, or mistreatment based on their gender identity or sexuality.

We recognize with sadness that certain religious teachings have often, throughout the ages, caused and continue to cause deep pain and offense to those who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex. We apologise.

We believe that any attempt to change a person's gender identity or sexuality is a form of abuse and an injustice that we cannot ignore.

The SJU supports the New Zealand Government's objectives in prohibiting conversion therapy, which will see an end to an injustice which removes the basic rights and dignity of those who are takatāpui and LGBTQI+

We believe that love and compassion should be the basis of faith and that hatred can have no place in religion, this bill does not impact that belief. Expressions of faith that seek to change people against their will; do not recognise them as being fearfully and wonderfully made in the image of God. These expressions of faith are a departure from what Christ taught and so we **oppose any exemptions** to be granted for churches or faith communities in the prohibition of conversion practices.

Conversion therapy normalises the idea that particular sexual orientations, gender identities, or gender expressions are wrong and need to be suppressed or fixed. This is untrue and causes immense harm to those who are takatāpui and LGBTQI+ who experience this.

The Social Justice Unit has heard stories of those who have experienced conversion therapy and been pressured to participate in the practice by people they trusted, these experiences reinforced in them a belief that there was something wrong in the way they were made by God and had a significant impact on their mental health and wellbeing.

We believe that it is the duty of the government to ban a practice that has been proven to have a detrimental impact of the mental health of those who are takatāpui and LGBTQI+.

We believe that no one should have the right to remove or harm a person's sense of identity and sexuality to justify their own belief system.

We believe that no person should experience the injustice of being pressured into conversion therapy by a friend because their inherent sexuality was deemed to be wrong.

We believe that no person should spend years of their life living a lie, because the sexuality they were born with wasn't accepted by their parents.

The SJU supports the New Zealand Government's objectives in prohibiting conversion therapy and ending a practice that insists a person's inherent sexuality or sexual identity is something that is wrong or needs to be fixed.