

MEDIA RELEASE – FEBRUARY 5, 2021

## **Banning of conversion therapy a step towards ending gender-based discrimination: Jesuit Social Services**

The passing of the *Change or Suppression (Conversion) Practices Prohibition Bill 2020 (Victoria)*, without amendment, will better support the dignity of each person and their right to be and express who they are, says Jesuit Social Services.

“This law will make a meaningful difference to the lives of many, and ultimately work towards a more equitable society for all,” says Jesuit Social Services CEO Julie Edwards.

The new law make it illegal to attempt to change or suppress the sexual orientation or gender identity of any person, and empower the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission to investigate and respond to reports of these practices.

Ms Edwards says Jesuit Social Services sees the impact of gender-based discrimination on the young people the organisation works with.

“Next year will mark 45 years of Jesuit Social Services working with and supporting some of the most marginalised young people in Victoria. We see the damage caused to young people when they are not recognised or accepted for who they are, and we also witness how they can blossom and reach their potential when they receive the support they need to express their true selves.

“As a social change organisation, we stand in solidarity beside our staff, participants and members of the wider community who are part of the LGBTQ+ communities and support their right to protection from conversion practices,” says Ms Edwards.

“Importantly, these new laws were developed in consultation with survivors, LGBTIQ+ support and advocacy organisations and faith-based organisations and are consistent with Victorian human rights laws.

“It is also crucial that responses to reports of these now-illegal practices are survivor-led and trauma-informed.

“We welcome the establishment of an accompanying civil response scheme within VEOHRC to support survivors and address the harm they have endured.

“Everybody deserves to live their life free of discrimination and with support to express their true selves, and an end to these damaging conversion practices is a landmark step towards this goal.”

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