

A Threat to Families, Freewill and Faith

On Tuesday evening, MPs will be holding the final vote on a new law which will ban ‘conversion therapy’. All New Zealanders should be protected from coercive, abusive or involuntary psychological or spiritual practices. However, there is no evidence that harmful ‘conversion therapy’ practices are still occurring in New Zealand. Even the Ministry of Justice’s advice to the Government admitted that. That’s good news. But are you aware of the legal effects of this new law?

CRIMINALISING PARENTS

A mother who encourages and helps her 12-year-old daughter to accept the body she was born with, rather than being placed on dangerous puberty blockers and wearing chest binders, could be committing a criminal offence. During the progress of this bill, the MPs refused to exclude “any conversations between a child and their parent”, and a parent “withholding consent for medical intervention in relation to gender transition” from being treated as a form of ‘conversion therapy’.

CRIMINALISING COUNSELLORS, CARERS & TEACHERS

It could be a crime for a counsellor, spiritual leader, pastor, youth worker, teacher or other professional to counsel a child or adult with gender dysphoria in a way that affirms biology. One-on-one counselling to help a teen struggling with body image due to anorexia would be permitted, but the very same counselling could be prohibited if the goal is to help a teen struggling with body image due to gender dysphoria.

CRIMINALISING PRAYER & FAITH-BASED COMMUNITIES

If a person wanted to align their sexuality with the teachings and values of their particular faith – be it Christian, Muslim, Jewish or Sikh, etc – and sought help to do so from a minister or faith leader, this could be treated as a crime. Prayer will be treated as a form of ‘conversion therapy’. Islamic and Christian schools could be breaking the law for teaching their students that Allah/God made us male and female. Church leaders, youth workers and imams could become criminals for reading and explaining the Quran or the Bible – that is, for doing their job. Expression of an opinion will be seen as a form of ‘conversion therapy’.

CRIMINALISING ‘CONSENT’

Incredibly, the proposed law says that consent – and therefore, self-determination - is irrelevant. Those who dare to seek inner freedom and healing from unwanted sexuality and gender issues, and to align their sexuality with the teachings and values of their particular faith, will have nowhere to turn as a result of this proposed ban.

CONCLUSION

Participation in psychological assessments, counselling sessions, prayer meetings and other therapeutic practices is almost always an expression of voluntary behaviour and personal freedom. To penalise people on the basis of their beliefs or personal lifestyle choices lacks fairness and is a dangerous discrimination. To criminalise parents who genuinely care for their children should certainly not be a crime warranting up to five years in jail.

POLLING – WHAT DO NEW ZEALANDERS THINK?

Curia Market Research - December 2020 (1,000 respondents, margin of error of +/- 3.1%)

Q: If a person is unsure about their sexual orientation or gender identity, should they be able to seek counselling support to determine their own direction in how they identify?

■ **81% YES** 12% NO 7% UNSURE

Q: If a child is confused about their gender, should it be a crime for a parent to affirm to their daughter that she’s a girl or to their son that he’s a boy?

■ **81% NO** 7% YES 12% UNSURE

Q: Should it be a crime for a faith leader to teach a Biblical or Quran view of sexuality, and of gender being determined at birth?

■ **62% NO** 16% YES 22% UNSURE

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