



## **Conversion Practices Ban An Explainer for Baptist Churches**

26 March 2025

A ban on Conversion Practices comes into effect in NSW on 4 April 2025, following the passage through state parliament of the Conversion Practices Ban Act (2024). Please find following a brief explainer about the ban and what this means for individuals and churches.

### **What is a “conversion practice”?**

Under NSW and ACT legislation, a “conversion practice” means a practice or treatment aimed at changing or suppressing a person’s sexual orientation or gender identity. Examples include psychological interventions and physical or verbal abuse, as well as extreme practices such as hypnosis and electro-convulsive shock treatment.

### **The new legislation**

In NSW, legislation was passed in mid-2024 whilst in the ACT similar legislation was passed in 2020 to ban conversion practices. In NSW, the Conversion Practices Ban Act will take effect from 4 April 2025. Much of it provides for civil remedies through a complaints scheme, however the more serious practices will attract criminal sanctions.

### **What is the civil complaints scheme?**

Complaints about conversion practices can be lodged by individuals or their representatives to Anti-Discrimination NSW for conciliation. Under the scheme, Anti-Discrimination NSW also has investigation, education and research functions. Its current explanatory resource can be found [here](#).

### **What practices are criminalised?**

Practices that cause substantial or life-endangering physical or mental harm can attract serious criminal penalties. It will also be an offence to take an individual from NSW to a place outside the state or engage someone from outside NSW to deliver a conversion practice in the state.

### **I am aware of conversion practices that occurred many years ago. What happens now?**

This is not a retrospective law. Activity before 4 April 2025 would not fall under the legislation.

## **Religious exemptions - Protections for faith communities in NSW**

In NSW there are parts of the law that exempt religious expression/teaching, membership or rules of religious and educational institutions, as well as parents discussing matters relating to sexual orientation, gender and religion with their children.

With respect to prayer, though an exemption exists in the legislation it appears that the prayer must not seek to suppress or change a person's identity potentially even in circumstances of consensual prayer between adults – i.e. if a person seeks out such prayer or support on their own volition. We continue to seek further clarification about these matters.

## **I am counselling someone in my congregation to remain chaste. Will this now be illegal?**

We expect that pastoral support and Christian counselling programs that seek to promote a chaste lifestyle in a biblical, loving, non-harmful and lawful manner will not run foul of the new legislation. However, as noted above, significant questions remain about the limits of such support.

The scope of the law will be tested in the legal system over time. We will be closely watching:

- The development of key terms such as “suppression” and “substantial harm”
- The extent to which religious protection provisions function to protect Christians
- Other issues (see [letter from faith leaders](#)) including when individuals actively or voluntarily seek help or support

The Baptist Association and our partners will continue to monitor these developments and communicate with churches. We recognise the importance of outlawing genuinely harmful practices, and also of preserving the capacity for persons to receive consensual discipling, support and prayer.