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From: Michael Riske [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, 27 January 2021 9:13 AM
To: Law Reform
Subject: Submission re: Sexual orientation and gender identity conversion

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To the Tasmanian Law Reform Institute,

Before the Tasmanian Law Reform is an inquiry which seeks to further help those of the LGBTQA+ community, however, the concern I have with the paper desires to criminalise the help that can be offered by the church.

As an employee of the church, one of my roles is to teach, care, love, and inform the church from God's word, and also from God's word to inform those in the community who may be seeking and wanting to know more about their place before God. I teach publicly from the bible, I meet with people privately, I pray with them, and I seek to counsel them when they come to me asking for help.

However, this paper suggests that such help would be harmful to those of the LGBTQA+ community. We can all agree that shock therapy and medication as a means to change a person's gender or sexual identity is harmful, but as far as I'm aware these things are not practiced in Australia. But this paper also suggests that religious practices such as offering pastoral care, counselling, praying, bible studies, and sermons, if directed to a person who is struggling with their sexual orientation and gender identity, should be a criminal offence.

Two of the things we value in Australia are freedom of speech and freedom of choice. Religions and churches should be free to teach and share what they believe. Individuals should be free to access religion if they choose to do so, and free to avoid it if they do not.

There are those in churches and in the community who will be struggling with their identity and at the same time working out their faith and their place before God. They will be seeking, questioning, hurting and wanting to be further informed by their faith. The church needs to be there for those in the church and in the community to care, love, and to inform these individuals. However, to criminalise church support on issues of sexual orientation and gender identity would be to remove a source of help and support for these individuals.

Please reconsider and refuse to criminalise the help that can be offered by churches. Don't criminalise an individual's choice to seek that help if they want it.

Kind regards,

Michael Riske
[REDACTED]