

27 March 2026

## Independent statutory review of the operation and effectiveness of the *Change or Suppression (Conversion) Practices Prohibition Act 2021*

Please find enclosed my submission, as the Victims of Crime Commissioner, to the above review. I thank the Victorian Law Reform Commission (VLRC) for its work on this important issue.

### Protecting LGBTIQ+ victims of crime

I understand that significant LGBTIQ+ community advocacy and consultation informed the *Change or Suppression (Conversion) Practices Prohibition Act 2021*. The evidence shows that conversion practices are harmful to LGBTIQ+ victims of crime. I therefore support that this review recommends strengthening protections for victims, with no protections to be rolled back in any way.

More broadly, consultation for my Office's 2023 report *Silenced and sidelined: Systemic inquiry into victim participation in the justice system* reiterated the well-evidenced reality that LGBTIQ+ victims of crime experience unique crimes and significant barriers to accessing the justice system.

To determine appropriate strengthening of protections and redress mechanisms, LGBTIQ+ victims' voices must be 'front and centre'. I encourage the VLRC and relevant agencies to consult directly with LGBTIQ+ specialist organisations and victims of crime in both this review and the development and implementation of any subsequent reforms. The work of the Victorian Commissioner for LGBTIQ+ Communities, Joe Ball, brings the voices of these victims to government and I encourage ongoing engagement with Commissioner Ball.

### Increased civil avenues for LGBTIQ+ victims

Research demonstrates that engaging with the justice system is traumatising for victims. This is uniquely true for LGBTIQ+ victims given historical and current systemic discrimination and barriers within the justice system.

Wherever possible, victims should have as wide a range of options available as possible, to seek justice in a way that suits their individual circumstances. I therefore support increased civil avenues for victims of conversion practices. Even

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in the instance of increased community education, low rates of reporting to Victoria Police likely demonstrate hesitance and fear by LGBTIQ+ victims of crime to engage with criminal processes.

As the consultation paper notes, victims are supportive of a redress scheme to 'provide financial support to survivors for recovery, in recognition of the costs of psychological support and reduced capacity to earn income.' I note that the Financial Assistance Scheme's requirement for victims to have reported to police is a particular barrier for LGBTIQ+ victims.

Based on these insights, I support a dedicated redress pathway for victims of conversion practices. Whether this is best addressed through existing mechanisms (such as VEOHRC or the Financial Assistance Scheme) or a new mechanism should be decided in direct consultation with LGBTIQ+ victims and specialist organisations.

### Community awareness, engagement and reporting

My understanding from stakeholders is that community awareness of the *Change or Suppression (Conversion) Practices Prohibition Act 2021* and available criminal and civil avenues is low.

To support reporting by LGBTIQ+ victims, all justice agencies should train their staff on the *Change or Suppression (Conversion) Practices Prohibition Act 2021*, safe and respectful engagement with LGBTIQ+ people, and clear referral and support pathways for LGBTIQ+ organisations. More generally, I encourage information for victims to be accessible in language (including languages other than English) and formats.

My Office has received no inquiries or complaints from victims of conversation practices of breaches of rights in the *Victims' Charter Act 2006*. This likely indicates general low engagement with criminal or civil avenues under the *Change or Suppression (Conversion) Practices Prohibition Act 2021*, as well as low knowledge among LGBTIQ+ communities of their *Victims' Charter Act 2006* rights and the Victims of Crime Commission's complain function. The review of the Victims' Charter, tabled in October 2025, clearly demonstrated very low awareness of Charter rights and complaints process among victims of crime generally. Where victims experience particular disadvantage, as it the case with LGBTIQ+ victims, this lack of access to rights is compounded.

I encourage further commitment and resourcing by government to proactively educate LGBTIQ+ communities of their rights as victims. This applies to rights

under the *Change or Suppression (Conversion) Practices Prohibition Act 2021* and complementary legislation such as the *Victims' Charter Act 2006*.

### Consideration of the *Victims' Charter Act 2006*

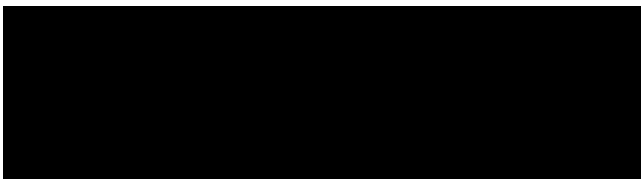
Should the VLRC recommend changes to the legislation, I encourage it to consider giving close attention to the obligations of responsible agencies under s18(2) of the *Victims' Charter Act 2006*:

#### *18 Implementation of Charter principles*

*(2) A person or body responsible for the development of criminal law policy, the development of victims' services policy, the administration of criminal justice or the administration of victims' services must, where relevant, have regard to the Charter principles.*

My Office is available to discuss s18(2) and the *Victims' Charter Act 2006* further, if this is useful to the review.

Yours sincerely



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Victims of Crime Commissioner