

Australians Could Face Up to Five Years in Jail for Praying

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"The new law makes it illegal to engage in prayer or counselling intended to change or suppress a person's sexuality or gender identity—even if that person requests it..."

The New South Wales (NSW) government has implemented the *Conversion Practices Ban Act 2024*, which came into effect on April 4, 2025. The new legislation, targeting conversion practices, has raised concerns, particularly among Christian communities, as it criminalizes certain forms of prayer and counselling aimed at changing or suppressing an individual's sexual orientation or gender identity.

Under the law, "conversion practices" are broadly defined by the NSW Government as actions, including prayer-based practices, intended to alter or suppress a person's sexuality or gender identity. According to the [NSW Anti-Discrimination website](#), such practices can occur in settings like Bible study groups, mentoring, counselling, and even camps or courses, where Bible-based guidance is provided.

What are examples of conversion practices?

Conversion practices include but are not limited to:

- Using shame, coercion or other tactics to give someone an aversion to same-sex attractions or to encourage gender-conforming behaviour
- Encouraging someone to believe their sexuality or gender is defective or disordered
- Performing a ritual, such as an exorcism or **prayer-based practice** to change or suppress someone's sexual orientation or gender identity.

Often, LGBTQA conversion practices are difficult to recognise because the forms they take might at first appear to be non-threatening, such as group study, mentoring and counselling, or camps and courses.

Screenshot from *Anti-Discrimination, New South Wales*

The government has clarified that while prayer itself is not inherently illegal, “praying with or over a person with the intent to change or suppress their sexuality or gender identity” is unlawful. The law applies even if an individual voluntarily requests prayer to change their sexual orientation or gender identity. The law’s scope extends further, stating that telling someone in a same-sex relationship to become celibate or cease sexual activity may also be considered unlawful, depending on the context.

Similarly, suggesting to an LGBTQA person that they should abstain from marriage or sexual relationships with individuals of the same sex could also be classified as illegal suppression of sexuality.

What about prayer and the teaching of abstinence and celibacy?

The *Conversion Practices Ban Act 2024* does not prohibit prayer. However, **praying with or over a person** with the intent to change or suppress their sexuality or gender identity is unlawful. It is unlawful even if that person has asked you to pray for them to be able to change or suppress their sexuality or gender identity.

General comments about celibacy and abstinence in broad statements of belief are not unlawful. However, telling a person in a same-sex relationship that they must stop being sexually active and become celibate could be regarded as suppressing a person's sexuality and may be unlawful, depending on the circumstances.

Similarly, telling an LGBTQA person that they should remain celibate and never marry or have a sexual relationship with a person of the same sex, could be regarded as suppressing a person's sexuality and may be unlawful, depending on the circumstances.

Screenshot from *Anti-Discrimination, New South Wales*

A pastor, speaking with Caldron Pool, expressed concerns about the legislation's impact on Christian freedom. "The Church's core business is discipleship – bringing people out of darkness and into the kingdom of Christ. Discipleship is therefore always about suppression and conversion, and this means the suppression and conversion of all desires and thoughts that are opposed to Christ's kingdom.

"Sex and gender do not sit in some protected category, and therefore no faithful Christian or minister can in good conscience abide by these laws."

The penalties under the new law are severe. Anyone found guilty of providing a conversion practice that results in substantial mental or physical harm, or endangers someone's life, could face up to five years in prison. In addition, taking someone outside of NSW or engaging someone from outside the state to perform a conversion practice could lead to up to three years in prison, a fine, or both.

The historic and Biblical stance on "LGBTQAI+" issues holds that any sexual relations outside of a God-ordained heterosexual marriage between a man and a woman are a distortion of God's created order and are therefore considered sinful. According to this view, individuals engaging in such behaviours are called to repent, meaning they must change their ways and "suppress" any sinful expressions.

The new legislation represents a significant encroachment on historic Christian teaching and practice, with many seeing it as a direct intrusion by the state into the realm of the Church.



Watch Video At: <https://youtu.be/YOajcuekkAE>



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