

06/01/20

To the committee secretary

**Re: Health Legislation Amendment Bill 2019**

I thank you for allowing me the opportunity to present this submission in being able to express my concern regarding sections in the Health Legislation Amendment Bill 2019 relating to conversion therapy.

I would like to make a few points regarding this legislation. It seems to deny or at least leave out the contribution of individual and family psychotherapy to the mental health of a child or adolescent with gender dysphoria. I have been advised by senior colleagues that a “watching waiting” approach which is often very effective whereby most gender confused children revert to their gender of birth through puberty may not be possible or in fact prohibited by this proposed legislation, as it seems to coerce the practising health practitioner in the name of the state to go along and affirm what could be life-long administration of hormones and the possibility of major surgery, including castration, for children.

It is not clear how scientifically proven at all these massive treatment undertakings are, the effects of which literally can last a lifetime, likely to linger on many years if the state mandates these treatments. It is stated that even proponents for hormonal intervention confess to lack of knowledge of the outcome of the above. Given such a potentially life-changing treatment, and that more expert sources state that a lot of children submitted to this proposed treatment have been found to suffer from co-morbid mental disorders such as autism, it gives concern, great concern, as to how adequate the children’s ability to fully understand such a profound decision they are making, regarding the possibility of side effects, and the experimental nature of the regime.

Furthermore, the bill seems to be vague or at least non specific regarding well meaning health practitioners who wish to help with the “watching waiting” approach given the above concerns and also with patients who may wish to access counselling and therapy consistent with their personal stand of not wanting to embark on gender changing treatment. I am concerned therefore both for the treating practitioner and the patient who don’t wish to start gender changing treatment but feel intimidated by the mentioned punitive action in the bill why tries to prohibit therapy leading to ‘suppressing’ gender identity issues i.e being forced by the law of Queensland to go along with the patient’s wishes even though professionally we may have grave concerns for their informed consent and welfare long term. And for the patients, who may have such feelings of gender dysphoria but do not wish to embark on gender reassignment treatment and cannot find a health practitioner brave enough to support them because they’ve been frightened by this proposed legislation, where does it leave them?

As other doctors will no doubt also submit, I empathise with Parliament’s concern for the welfare of children suffering from gender dysphoria and with the associated suffering of families. However given the above perhaps well intentioned but misguided way of forcing change as well as quoted statistics of the suicide rate in transgendering adults being some twenty times higher than the general population ( not improved but worsening mental health after gender reassignment treatment), I write to you to request to think more broadly and longterm regarding children’s health in this area. Seeing the state legislating treatment which is not fully proven and in fact may cause irreparable harm in the name of the state, I ask you to consider what is really the duty of care for individual health practitioners and the state government towards children?

I am a general practitioner doctor who practises holistic medicine for all age groups and who holds a diploma in child health though does not practice exclusively in this field. However, I have significant concern about the bill for the reasons I have described, and ask that you would seriously consider these issues and vote against the bill in its current form. Thank you for your time considering this.

Kind regards

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