# Australia: Coalition takes tougher line on gay conversion therapy after Labor promises ban

Sunday 5 May 2019, by [KARP Paul](#) (Date first published: 24 April 2019).

**Move comes a day after Scott Morrison dismissed the 'discredited' practice as a state issue**

The [Coalition](#) has suggested it will work to discourage gay conversion therapy just a day after Scott Morrison poured cold-water on Labor's push to stamp the practice out.

In a response to peak LGBTIQ group Equality Australia, the Morrison government has committed to work with the states "to ensure such practices are not supported or occurring".

On Tuesday Labor promised to work with the states to introduce a national ban on gay conversion therapy.

Asked about the policy, Morrison told Sky News: "I don't support gay conversion therapy, don't recommend it, never have but it's ultimately a matter for the states."

"I think we should focus on the things we actually have control over and that's taxes. I'm looking to lower taxes."

But in its response to an Equality Australia survey, signed by Liberal federal director Andrew Hirst, the Coalition went further, stating that "the use of conversion therapy has long been discredited with no scientific or medical evidence to support its use".

"The Morrison government remains committed to addressing the mental health of all Australians, including the LGBTI community, and this also relates to opposition to gay conversion therapy," it said.

"The government will work with the states, which have legal responsibility in this area, to ensure such practices are not supported or occurring."

The Coalition made no commitment to introduce programs to make schools more inclusive for LGBTIQ+ children and children from rainbow families, arguing that states and territories have sole responsibility for programs such as Safe Schools.

In several answers the Coalition noted it has set up an Australian Law Reform Commission review [to look at the contentious issues](#) of religious exemptions to discrimination law, which allow discrimination against staff and students based on sex and sexuality in most states.

On Tuesday the health minister Greg Hunt promised an extra $2m to the National LGBTI Health Alliance over two years for the peer support telephone and online support service, QLife.

In addition to its policy to ban gay conversion therapy, Labor promised to create an LGBTIQ advisory council and human rights commissioner to advocate for and advance the rights of LGBTIQ

Australians.

Labor has committed to amend the Sex Discrimination Act to remove the exemptions that permit religious schools to discriminate against students and staff on the basis of their sexuality or gender identity.

Both major parties reiterated support for offshore detention, but Labor suggested it could improve processing of LGBTIQ asylum seekers by ensuring assessments "take account of the very different manifestations" of different sex and gender identities.

"Labor believes that when assessing asylum claims where the fear of persecution arises from a person's lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer status, the fact that the country the person is fleeing has criminal penalties for engaging in consensual homosexual sex is sufficient of itself to establish that fear of persecution is well-founded."

The Greens committed to remove all religious exemptions to anti-discrimination law and to abolish offshore detention. The party supports the ban on gay conversion therapy.

The Greens promised to abolish the school chaplains program and invest the money in "secular, unbiased and inclusive support for students through counsellors and anti-bullying initiatives such as the Safe Schools program".

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