



The Hon Daniel Andrews MP  
Premier of Victoria  
Parliament House  
Spring St  
East Melbourne VIC 3002

## Dear Premier

We write on behalf of the Muslim and Catholic communities in Victoria in solidarity with other people of faith, expressing profound concern over the Change or Suppression (Conversion) Practices Prohibition Bill 2020.

Every day we are working alongside our fellow Victorians to celebrate our diversity, care for the vulnerable and serve one another. We value our freedom to do so responsibly, by supporting and caring for people in their searching and questioning, with honesty, attentiveness, and compassion.

Unfortunately, this Bill doesn't just ban out-dated and insidious practices of coercion and harm, which we firmly reject. The bill also criminalises conversation between children and parents, interferes with sound professional advice, and silences ministers of religion from providing personal attention for individuals freely seeking pastoral care for complex personal situations. It includes ill-conceived concepts of faith and conversation, vague definitions, and scientifically and medically flawed approaches. It places arbitrary limitations on parents, families and people of faith. People change for all kinds of reasons, and should feel free to do so, whether it be on matters of personal identity, gender, sexuality, family association, or religion. Contrary to its intent, this Bill obstructs people's freedom by limiting, restricting and removing options for their good, thereby creating undesirable possibilities of harm.

If a simpler, clearer bill had been tabled, with adequate consultation, then we would be able to give full support to a focused and practical way to protect people from harm.

Other faith communities, religious representatives and organisations have contacted you and the Attorney General to seek resolution to these difficulties. With this letter we stand with them and look for respectful engagement.

At present the Bill appears to target people of faith in an unprecedented way, puts limits on ordinary conversations in families, and legislates for what prayer is legal and what prayer is not. Various amendments can be made to rescue the Bill from taking Victoria into strange new territory, in which prayerful advice and guidance, freely sought by one adult from another, is criminalised. We are working together as faith leaders to offer a constructive opportunity to prevent such a step from taking place, and seek your active support.

Specifically, we seek an urgent 'pause' on the Bill and a meeting with yourself and the Attorney General, and ask for transparent and comprehensive consultation. We make this request publicly and respectfully, always open to dialogue and to finding a constructive resolution.

Yours sincerely,

Mr Mohamed Mohideen,  
President, on behalf of the Islamic Council of Victoria

Most Reverends Greg Bennet, Paul Bird CSsR, Peter A Comensoli, Terence Curtin, Shane Mackinlay,  
Bosco Puthur, Peter Stasiuk CSsR, Antoine-Charbel Tarabay  
on behalf of Catholic Dioceses and Eparchies of Victoria