

# Looking out for LGBTI Tasmanians



Cassy O'Connor MP | Greens' Leader

**Every Australian has the right to be treated equally. Action on equality is essential for a healthy, accepting society.**

Depression, anxiety, psychological distress, self-harm, and suicide attempts are significantly over-represented in the LGBTI community in Australia, with life time suicide attempts in some population cross sections as high as 35%.<sup>1</sup>

The key factors for disparities in mental health amongst LGBTI people are discrimination and exclusion.<sup>2</sup>

We must act to ensure our laws are just, and promote equality and public health.

## THE GREENS WILL

- ▲ Introduce a public campaign to dispel harmful myths.
- ▲ Invest in mental health programs.
- ▲ Ensure that people are not forced to get divorced in order to change the sex on their birth certificate.
- ▲ Ban harmful conversion therapies.
- ▲ Invest in anti-bullying and sexual health education in our schools.

## EQUALITY CAMPAIGN

The recent postal vote not only highlighted some fundamental misconceptions about gender and sexuality that exist in our community, but also propagated some alarming falsehoods that harm LGBTI Australians.

We will provide funding to develop a campaign highlighting that promoting equality is everybody's responsibility, urging Tasmanians to come together as a community and to put the wellbeing of people before prejudice.

The campaign will include a sensitive discussion of the importance of sexual health education programs in schools for the prevention of psychological distress, sexual abuse, and spread of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and dispel some of the harmful myths put forward during the marriage equality debate.

## MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAMS

Mental health disparities are pronounced for transgender Australians.<sup>3</sup> This is particularly so for transgender youth, with 74.6% being diagnosed with depression, 72.2% diagnosed with an anxiety disorder, and 48.1% attempting suicide at some point in their lives.<sup>4</sup>

These statistics are indicative of serious problems that we have yet to deal with in our country. We will assess where resources are most needed, and make a commitment of \$200,000 per year available for under-resourced LGBTI mental health programs in regional Tasmania.

The Greens will re-establish funding for the LGBTI suicide prevention program, introduced by a Greens Minister under the Labor/Green government in 2013 and the first of its kind in Australia, which was scrapped by the Liberals. We will also provide funding for two new staff members in the LGBTI policy task group.

## NO FORCED DIVORCE

As the law currently stands, a married person is forced to be divorced if they wish to change their sex on their birth certificate. With marriage equality now enshrined in law, there is no longer any excuse to let this stand. The Greens will move to overturn this unjust law.

## CONVERSION/REPARATIVE THERAPY

Conversion, or reparative therapy, is the discredited practice of attempting to make non-heterosexual individuals heterosexual, based on the faulty premise that non-heterosexual individuals are sexually deviant.<sup>5</sup>

Medical, psychological, and mental health organisations across the world have discredited this practice.<sup>6,7,8</sup> The Australian Psychological Society officially took a stance against conversion/reparative therapies in June 2000.<sup>9</sup>

In 2015 a report from the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights called for nations to ban conversion therapy, describing the practice as “unethical, unscientific and ineffective and, in some instances, tantamount to torture”.<sup>10</sup>

As the constitution may not allow for federal law banning conversion therapy<sup>11</sup>, States will likely have to provide legislative solutions to protect LGBTI Tasmanians from the harm these practices cause.

Ontario<sup>12</sup>, Malta<sup>13</sup>, and the United States<sup>14</sup> have all introduced legislation to ban conversion therapy. The Greens would review legislative approaches around the world and draft a bill to ban this practice.

## INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

LGBTI youth are frequently exposed to either overt or unconscious microaggressions – some quite obvious and others more subtle.<sup>15</sup> We will design an LGBTI anti-bullying program for our schools.

Sexual health education in schools is essential for preventing STIs, unintended pregnancies and abortions, sexual dysfunction and sexual violence.<sup>16</sup>

LGBTI people are disproportionately affected by sexual violence,<sup>17,18</sup> tend to be taken less seriously than heterosexual victims,<sup>19,20</sup> and face different forms and/or circumstances of sexual abuse than heterosexuals.<sup>21,22</sup>

The absence of open and relevant discussion of sexuality and gender with children can create, and sustain, vulnerability to coercion, abuse and exploitation.<sup>23</sup> LGBTI people have routinely reported that traditional sex education programs are not very useful or relevant to them.<sup>24,25</sup>

Several LGBTI cohorts are more vulnerable to STIs than heterosexuals.<sup>26</sup> Disseminating information more relevant to means of transmission for men who has sex with men (MSM) and women who have sex with women (WSW) is critical for prevention.<sup>27</sup>

The Greens will fund the development of evidence based inclusive, relevant and sensitive sexual health education programs for our schools.

## INITIATIVE COST

Initiative Investment (\$m)	1 <sup>st</sup> Year	2 <sup>nd</sup> Year	3 <sup>rd</sup> Year	4 <sup>th</sup> Year
Equality campaign	0.50	0.50	-	-
LGBTI mental health	0.20	0.20	0.21	0.21
LGBTI Suicide Prevention	0.20	0.20	0.21	0.21
Policy Task Group	0.20	0.20	0.21	0.21
School programs	1.00	0.10	0.10	0.10
<b>Total</b>	<b>2.10</b>	<b>1.20</b>	<b>0.73</b>	<b>0.73</b>

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### DO YOU, OR SOMEONE YOU KNOW, NEED HELP?

[Lifeline](#) (13 11 14) or the [Suicide Call Back Service](#) (1300 659 467) for 24-hour Australian counselling services.

[Beyondblue](#) (1300 22 4636) for 24-hour phone support, online chat, resources and apps.

[Mindout](#) for mental health and suicide support for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people.

[Kids Helpline](#) (1800 55 1800) – free confidential 24-hour counselling for young people aged 5 to 18.

[Headspace](#) offers online counselling for young people aged 12-25 and [ReachOut](#) has online forums, chat and information about youth mental health.



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### ▲ WANT MORE INFO?

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