

## **Use of psychological practices that attempt to change or suppress a person's sexual orientation or gender: Position statement**

Approaches to mental health practice variously referred to as 'reparative', 'conversion' or 'ex-gay' 'therapy' are based on the assumption that being lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or queer (LGBTQ+) is indicative of psychological dysfunction, and that this can be 'cured'. No professional health organisation in Australia supports these approaches, for the following reasons:

1. There is no clinical evidence demonstrating that approaches that claim to change or suppress a person's sexual orientation or gender are effective.
2. There is, however, a considerable body of evidence documenting the negative effects of stigma associated with being a member of LGBTQ+ communities, including higher rates of depression.
3. There is also clinical evidence that change or suppression practices are harmful and can compound the challenges already faced by LGBTQ+ communities.

As a professional organisation committed to evidence-based practice, the Australian Psychological Society (APS) strongly opposes any form of mental health practice that tries to change or suppress someone's sexual orientation or gender.

Instead, in response to an individual client who may be exploring their sexual orientation or gender and who may be struggling to reconcile it with their beliefs or those of significant others in their lives, the APS recommends psychological approaches that attempt to:

- Challenge negative stereotypes
- Develop affirming social supports
- Promote self-acceptance
- Increase mental health literacy

Such responses are in line with the [Psychology Board of Australia Code of conduct](#) and [APS Professional practice guidelines](#) for Psychological Practice with LGBTIQ+ clients.