

Submission to the Australian Human Rights Commission: Current and emerging threats to TGD human rights - TGD Christians & TGD People within Christian contexts

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Specialist Area: Advocacy and activist organisations or group; Service provider.

Subject Matter Expertise: Lived experience as a trans Christian. Professional engagement as the pastor of a church with TGD congregants for two years. Leadership role within Equal Voices, an organisation advocating for the rights and inclusion of TGD people within the Australian Church.

Current & Emerging Threats - Issues Impacting Trans & Gender Diverse People of Faith/Christians

- Many TGD people cannot practice their faith within their own churches, or the church of their choosing, within Australia, as these faith communities subject TGD people to discrimination, suppression of identity (conversion practices) and rejection;
- Foundational church documents and doctrines predominantly reflect cisgender perspectives, marginalising the voices and experiences of TGD people within their own faith communities.
- Disinformation about TGD people is spread within Christian education settings, such as theological colleges, and within denominational leadership;
- Systemic erasure of TGD people perpetuates a cycle of exclusion, denying TGD individuals agency and representation within the very institutions meant to provide them spiritual guidance and support;
- The lack of adequate training for religious leaders in supporting TGD people – particularly including lived experience and evidence-based information – further exacerbates these issues;
- Pastoral care often pressures TGD people to suppress their identities;
- TGD people face barriers to employment within Christian organisations, with limited pathways for TGD people seeking roles as pastors, teachers, chaplains;

And,

- While a public narrative still exists that trans people cannot be Christian, there are many TGD Christians
- There are many TGD people coming into their identity as trans or gender expansive within their own churches, Christian schools, faith-based communities and families;
- There are Christian parents and families who want to foster a loving environment for their TGD children, and seek out support from beyond their own faith communities or schools;
- Some churches celebrate TGD Christians and create places where people's whole identities can be lived – these places have all gender bathrooms, use gender neutral language in services and scripture readings, ordain TGD people as pastors and leaders, do not segregate groups based by gender e.g. "men's retreat", or offer gender neutral alternatives e.g. bushwalking group.
- We can cultivate more spaces where TGD people have belonging and support within their chosen faith communities, schools and other Christian organisations by fostering dialogue, platforming the voices of TGD people, and prioritising comprehensive education within Christian settings, particularly publicly funded ones.