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INQUIRY INTO CONVERSION THERAPY

News:

The Health Complaints Commissioner (HCC) will conduct an inquiry into the practice of conversion therapy in Victoria.

Historical cases of the controversial practice of conversion therapy, which is the practice of trying to change a person's sexual orientation or gender identity using psychological or spiritual interventions, have been reported in the media in recent months but no complaints have been received by the HCC.

Commissioner Karen Cusack said the inquiry was a chance for anyone who'd recently experienced conversion therapy to come forward confidentially, if they wish, to report their experience.

"Our inquiry will focus on understanding what the practice of conversion therapy involves and who is carrying it out," Ms Cusack said. "I understand these issues could be raw and very distressing for people to discuss and my staff will treat anyone coming forward with sensitivity and confidentiality."

On completing the inquiry, the HCC may make recommendations as a result.

The HCC began operation on 1 February 2017 to resolve complaints about health services and the handling of health information in Victoria, as well as to investigate dangerous or unethical providers.

From this date a general code of conduct applies to all general health service providers, meaning those not regulated by AHPRA and including counsellors. The code outlines the standards of safe and ethical healthcare and, if

breached, provides grounds for a complaint and possible further action including prohibition orders and public warning statements.

“The Health Complaints Act 2016 includes a very broad definition of what a ‘health service’ is and while the practice of conversion therapy has not yet been tested under the Act, the definition is such that it may include this damaging practice,” Ms Cusack said.

Anyone with a recent experience of conversion therapy, or who has information about the practice, is invited to call us on 1300 582 113 or email hcc@hcc.vic.gov.au to assist with the inquiry.

Inquiry into Conversion Therapy/Practices in Victoria -
Terms of Reference