

## Media Release

### Doctors criticise gay conversion therapy remarks in marriage equality debate

Monday, 18 September 2017

The Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP) and the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists (RANZCP) have condemned comments made by the Australian Christian Lobby (ACL) about gay conversion therapy.

During an interview with a BuzzFeed News political podcast, Lyle Shelton, managing director of the ACL said parents should be able to have their children counselled about same sex attraction.

“Gay conversion therapy is unethical, harmful and not supported by medical evidence,” RACP President, Dr Catherine Yelland said.

The RACP’s [Sexual and Reproductive Health Care for Young People Position Statement](#) reminds health professionals and health services that young people have rights to confidential, non-judgemental sexual and reproductive health care.

“This debate is about marriage equality and we feel that it is highly inappropriate that gay conversion therapy is even considered to be a valid discussion in this context,” RANZCP President, Dr Kym Jenkins said.

“The RANZCP does not support the use of change therapy of any kind, when assisting people distressed by their own or others’ sexual orientation, the role of the mental health worker is to provide care and treatment approaches that involve acceptance, support, and identity exploration, as outlined in the RANZCP’s [position statement 60 sexual orientation change efforts](#),” Dr Jenkins said.

The RACP and RANZCP have reaffirmed their public support for marriage equality and called for the Australian Government to remove discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex (LGBTI) Australians in same-sex relationships.

“The public health case for marriage equality is strong and changing the legal definition of marriage will be an important step towards ensuring legal, societal and health equity for all LGBTI Australians and their families,” Dr Yelland said.

“Evidence suggests that changing the legal definition of marriage to include LGBTI Australians and affording them the same social validation and legal status of committed heterosexual relationships will bring about improved health outcomes for this population.”

The RANZCP supports marriage equality and recognises the positive link between improved mental health outcomes and legislative change for LGBTI people and their children. For more information, see the RANZCP’s 2016 [Position Statement 83 Recognising and addressing the mental health needs of the LGBTI population](#).

**RACP Media contact:** Melissah Bell 0415 111 503

**RANZCP Media contact:** Genevieve Costigan 0437 315 911

**About The Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP):** The RACP trains, educates and advocates on behalf of more than 25,000 physicians and trainee physicians across Australia and New Zealand. The College represents a broad range of medical specialties including general medicine, paediatrics and child health, cardiology, respiratory medicine, neurology, oncology, public health medicine, occupational and environmental medicine, palliative medicine, sexual health medicine,

rehabilitation medicine, geriatric medicine and addiction medicine. Beyond the drive for medical excellence, the RACP is committed to developing health and social policies which bring vital improvements to the wellbeing of patients. The College offers 60 training pathways. These lead to the award of one of seven qualifications that align with 45 specialist titles recognised by the Medical Board of Australia or allow for registration in nine vocational scopes with the Medical Council of New Zealand

The **Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists** is a membership organisation that prepares medical specialists in the field of psychiatry, supports and enhances clinical practice, advocates for people affected by mental illness and advises governments on mental health care. For information about our work, our members or our history, visit [www.ranzcp.org](http://www.ranzcp.org).