

APANZ November 2024 policy statement regarding sexual orientation and gender identity and presentation change efforts.

- A. We, the Association of Psychotherapists Aotearoa New Zealand, Te Rōpū Whakaora Hinengaro, reaffirm our position that aims to change a person's sexual orientation or gender identity are unacceptable within psychotherapeutic practice. In doing this we align with other professional mental health and statutory bodies who have issued similar statements. Sexual orientation and gender identity change efforts are harmful and lack credible scientific evidence. They are illegal in Aotearoa New Zealand and contrary to our Code of Ethics.
- B. We regard diversity in sexual orientations and genders to be an inherent part of the spectrum of human sexualities. We affirm that no sexual orientation or gender identity, expression, or experience is any more valid, 'natural' or 'normal' than any other. Any psychotherapeutic attempts to change a person's sexual orientation or gender identity or suppress their experience or expression of their sexuality or gender, is a form of conversion therapy and is unethical.
- C. Sexual orientation and gender identity change efforts are based on perspectives that there are some sexual orientations, and gender identities and expressions which are "more normal" than others. We do not accept these perspectives and consider such assumptions to be harmful to psychotherapeutic work as they impede the necessity for psychotherapists to be receptive to the client's subjective experience.
- D. Sexual orientation and gender identity change efforts continue the process of colonisation and the subjugation of indigenous Māori sexualities and are at odds with our Association's commitment to honour Te Tiriti o Waitangi. We acknowledge Takatāpui as a unique indigenous identity, encompassing diverse sexual orientations and gender identities, that does not necessarily equate with other LGBTQAI+ identities.
- E. Given that we are all sexual and gendered beings, psychotherapists, like all human beings, are susceptible to being consciously and unconsciously influenced by normative assumptions regarding sexuality and gender. As we do with all other clinical work, we therefore consider it foundational to psychotherapeutic work that clinicians continue in an ongoing way to utilise supervision, peer support, training, and where appropriate, their own therapy, to continue to reflect upon their own consciously and unconsciously held perspectives in relation to sexuality and gender, and the manner in which these interact with clinical work.
- F. We believe that the above principles enhance the creation of a psychotherapeutic environment within which psychotherapists are able to thoughtfully receive all aspects of clients' subjective experience, including those related to gender and sexuality, and to work with clients, to enhance self-understanding, in a deeply reflective manner, in relation to clients' experience of themselves, including, where clinically appropriate, their sexuality and gender experience, presentation and identity. We support psychotherapists to create such an environment in support of a respectful commitment to open ended enquiry and unhurried exploration within their work.