

Thorne Harbour calls for community to take action against Brunei's homophobic laws

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

29 MARCH 2019 — Thorne Harbour Health unequivocally condemns Brunei's adoption of laws that include the barbaric treatment of sexuality and gender diverse people, and calls on the Australian Government as well as the broader community to take swift and decisive action to protect our gender, sex, and sexuality diverse communities. Under the new Brunei laws this includes people being whipped or stoned to death for offences like sodomy, blasphemy and adultery.

The recent update (27 March 2019) on Australia's SmartTraveller website advises:

"From 3 April 2019 the full sharia penal code (law) takes effect in Brunei. It applies to Muslims, non-Muslim and foreigners even when on Brunei registered aircraft and vessels. Under this code some offences can attract physical punishment while others attract executions."

"This is essentially state-sponsored brutality against people of diverse gender and sexuality and a violation of basic human rights — there's no place for it," said Thorne Harbour CEO Simon Ruth.

"The Federal Government must immediately revoke Royal Brunei Airlines right to land in Australia to keep sexuality and gender diverse Australians safe from Brunei's new laws. There should also be a review into the effectiveness of Government's travel warnings for LGBTI people."

As of this morning, the Government's level of advice for those traveling to Brunei remains unchanged at 'exercise normal safety precautions'. This raises serious questions about the utility of applying travel advice only at general level. Clearly the level of risk traveling to Brunei is high for gender and sexuality diverse people when they can soon face physical punishment and execution merely for being who they are. Travel warnings should clearly reflect this.

"It goes beyond government action - we need to take action collectively to say laws specifically punishing our LGBTI communities for being who they are have no place in society."

In addition to calling on the Australian Government to rescind Royal Brunei's permissions to fly to Australia, Thorne Harbour is calling on Melbourne Airport to no longer accept flights from Royal Brunei or refuel them as well as large travel centres like Flight Centre and STA Travel to immediately stop selling their flights.

Neil Pharaoh has organised an online petition, and the organisation is encouraging its members and the broader community to sign it in support of our LGBTI communities:

<https://www.megaphone.org.au/petitions/ban-royal-brunei-airlines-from-australia>

ENDS

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