



Proposals from Members

24 Apology to LGBTIQ Australians

That the Assembly resolve:

To request the Standing Committee to:

- (a) appoint a task group to consult widely with LGBTIQ and other members of the Church in order to develop the wording of an official apology from the Uniting Church in Australia to LGBTIQ Australians for the Church's role in the silence, rejection, discrimination and stereotyping of LGBTIQ people; and
- (b) bring a proposal regarding an apology to the 16th Assembly.

Proposer: Peter Weeks

Seconder: Rick Morrell

Rationale:

Until quite recently, in Western societies such as Australia, LGBTIQ people have been regarded with a high degree of official and unofficial rejection and exclusion. This was seen legally where male homosexuality was a criminal offense, medically where it was treated as a serious mental illness, socially where individuals were ostracised and discriminated against, and religiously where the near universal view equated homosexuality with sin and evil. Transgender and other gender diverse people have rarely been illegal but widespread ignorance has led to ostracism, rejection, ridicule and medical negligence. Intersex variation has been often unknown or, when known, individuals subject to cruel and damaging surgeries often at an early age.

Churches have participated in this general opprobrium in numerous ways. Fortunately this is gradually changing as society becomes more educated concerning LGBTIQ people, and as LGBTIQ people themselves have made decisions to 'come out' and claim their rightful place as full citizens in society.

In Australia the Uniting Church has been at the forefront of reconsidering Christian approaches to lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) people, though overwhelmingly silent on transgender and intersex people.

A process leading to an official apology will need to carefully examine the church's own role in the silence, rejection, discrimination and stereotyping of LGBTIQ people. For LGBTIQ Christians the most hurtful and damaging experience has been the suggestion that one needs to choose between faith in Christ Jesus and affirming one's sexual orientation, gender identity or intersex status.

A respectful process in developing an apology will involve listening to all, honestly naming the past, and respecting differences. An apology will hopefully contribute to healing and reconciliation within the Uniting Church, with the Australian LGBTIQ communities and the wider society. The best apology might be a "living apology" though this does not preclude a formal statement by the Assembly in 2021.