



**PRESIDENT:** Rev Sharon Hollis

**GENERAL SECRETARY:** Colleen Geyer

## **To UCA members, congregations and faith communities,**

Dear friends in Christ,

This week will be a challenging week for some members of our Uniting Church community as the Australian Parliament considers the Religious Discrimination Bill.

I am aware the current political debate will heighten the vulnerability of members of the LGBTIQA+ community, particularly LGBTIQA+ children and their families. You are in my prayers at this time.

I also uphold in prayer people with disabilities who have concerns that they might experience discrimination and judgement in the provision of services if the Bill proceeds.

The Uniting Church has urged Members of Parliament not to rush the Bill into law. We maintain the Bill does not strike the correct balance between rights and protections. In submissions to Government, we expressed concerns for the safety and wellbeing of LGBTIQA+ people, people with disabilities, women, and people of minority faith communities, should the Bill be passed in its current form.

We have acknowledged that there are members of the UCA who remain fearful for the consequences, intended and unintended, that might arise from this legislation.

The Uniting Church is committed to seeking to be a place of welcome and inclusion for all people, including LGBTIQA+ people and people with disabilities.

Our commitment comes from our belief that all people are created in the image of God and are loved and valued by God.

We believe every person is entitled to dignity, compassion and respect, and that the community flourishes when all people are included and accorded the dignity and respect they deserve.

I note with sadness not all LGBTIQA+ people feel fully welcome and safe across the Uniting Church.

I encourage members of the Uniting Church and people of faith to offer prayer and support to those around them who are feeling particularly vulnerable because of the political and public debate taking place.

In the weeks ahead, I encourage those who lead worship to think about how they will preach and pray and the language they use that expresses this commitment to the inclusion of all.



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Many of us still have much to learn about how to be allies of both LGBTIQ+ people and people with disabilities, so in the weeks and months ahead, I encourage you to show your solidarity through learning, growing and becoming more informed about how to provide care and support.

In my sermon to the Assembly meeting, and the theme I chose for the Assembly, I urged all members to *dwell in love*. For me this is what it means to dwell in love, that we do the hard work required to enact our love with care, knowledge and compassion.

Grace and Peace,

Rev Sharon Hollis  
President of the Uniting Church in Australia Assembly

**If you need help or support you can contact one of the following services for phone or online support:**

**QLIFE** (3pm - midnight, every day)  
Specialist LGTBTIQa+ support service. Free service, Australia-wide.  
Phone: 1800 184 527 Visit: [qlife.org.au](http://qlife.org.au)

**Beyond Blue:** The Beyond Blue Support Service provides advice and support via telephone 24/7 (just call 1300 22 4636), daily web chat (between 3pm–12am) and email (with a response provided within 24 hours). <http://www.beyondblue.org.au>

**Lifeline:** Phone 13 11 14 available 24 hours / 7 days - Australia's largest crisis support line. Anyone in Australia can speak to a trained Crisis Supporter over the phone, any time of the day or night.  
Lifeline Text 0477 13 11 14 available nightly - Australia's first SMS-based Crisis Support service, any person in Australia can receive support from a Crisis Supporter by text message every night. <https://www.lifeline.org.au/>

**Headspace:** Phone 1800 650 890  
Free telephone service that supports young people aged between 12 and 25 and their families going through a tough time.

**Kids Helpline:** 1800 55 1800  
A free, private and confidential, telephone and online counselling service specifically for young people aged between 5 and 25.