



# Uniting Church in Australia

## ASSEMBLY

Assembly Standing Committee

15-17 JULY 2022

DOCUMENT 11

Type of Paper (Information/Decision)	For Information, Discussion and Decision
Title	Apology to LGBTIQ Australians Task Group
Assembly or ASC Minute	ASC, July 2019
Consultation	
Purpose	To update the ASC on the work of the Task Group, including a Consultation Plan, and a Discussion Paper.
Rationale & Findings Summary	
Attachments	Attachment A: Updated Terms of Reference (In this doc) Attachment B: Project and Consultation Plan (In this doc) Attachment C: Discussion Paper (separate doc)
Recommendations	That the Assembly Standing Committee:  <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Receives the report.</li><li>2. Approves the updated Terms of Reference (ToR) (Attachment A), including that the reference to “LGBTIQ” people in the name of the TG and the ToR be amended to “LGBTIQA+”.</li><li>3. Agrees that the ToR and membership of the Task Group (TG) be made available when the TG is undertaking consultations.</li><li>4. Notes the revised Project and Consultation Plan (Attachment B).</li><li>5. Approves the proposed Discussion Paper (Attachment C) to be used as a background paper to assist the Task Group in consultations, preparing the wider Church for the consideration of a formal apology at the Assembly meeting in 2024.</li><li>6. Agrees in principle that a trans or other gender diverse person be appointed to the Task Group, and delegate a decision regarding a specific individual to the President and General Secretary, on the recommendation of the Task Group Convenor.</li><li>7. Recognise the significant contribution of Warren Talbot to resourcing the work of the Task Group and appoint him as Task Group Secretary.</li><li>8. Supports the establishment of an official email address for the Task Group eg LGBTIQA+apology@nat.uniting.org.au</li></ol>
Submitted by	Lin Hatfield Dodds, Convenor

## **Apology to LGBTIQ Australians Task Group**

1. Since the March meeting of the ASC the Task Group has met three times and has reviewed and updated the Terms of Reference, Project and Consultation Plan, and Discussion Paper.

### **Terms of Reference (Recommendation 2)**

2. There are four main suggested changes:
  - (a) The Terms of Reference were approved in July 2019, and refer to a possible report to the 16<sup>th</sup> Assembly. This is updated to the 17<sup>th</sup> Assembly (2024).
  - (b) The Terms of Reference require the work of the TG to “embody an inclusive church where those of differing ability, age, gender, race, sexuality are welcomed”. The TG believes that we should add a reference to “gender identity” to this clause. We have become very aware during our work to date of the many different issues facing trans and other gender diverse (TGD) people, compared to the issues faced by lesbian, gay and bisexual people.
  - (c) The current membership of the TG is listed.
  - (d) The acronym LGBTIQ, and variations thereof, is an evolving way to speak of the amazing diversity of human sexualities, gender identities and physiological sex characteristics. Although not in universal use, LGBTIQ communities increasingly use something like “LGBTIQA+”. The TG believe this should be respected.

### **Terms of Reference and list of members (Recommendation 3)**

3. The Task Group believes that making the TOR available as part of consultations and engagement is important in terms of transparency, and to provide context and framing to the work..

### **Project and Consultation Plan (Recommendation 4)**

4. To date the Task Group has mainly invited key individuals to participate in TG meetings. Moving forward a number of specific consultations outside regular monthly meetings will be required to carry out the ToR to “consult widely with LGBTIQ and other members of the Church”.

### **Discussion Paper (Recommendation 5)**

5. Following a meeting with the President and General Secretary a previous draft of a considerably longer paper has been significantly revised in term of length, focus and clarity.

### **Membership (Recommendation 6)**

6. The Task Group has become aware of the particular concerns of trans and other gender diverse (TGD) people. Adding one person to the membership of the TG would assist our considerations and not overlook specific concerns from the TGD communities. This would bring membership to eight. There are no resource implications given that we meet via Zoom. The delegation in respect of appointing a specific individual to the President and General Secretary on the recommendation of the Task Group Convenor is suggested as we regard the matter as urgent once an appropriate individual is identified.

## Attachment A

### Apology to LGBTIQ<sup>A+</sup> Australians Task Group - Terms of Reference

<b>Purpose</b>	To develop the wording of an official apology from the Uniting Church in Australia to LGBTIQ <sup>A+</sup> Australians for the Church's role in the silence, rejection, discrimination and stereotyping of LGBTIQ <sup>A+</sup> people, couples and families.
<b>Reporting Arrangements:</b>	Assembly Standing Committee (ASC)
<b>Period:</b>	This Terms of Reference is for the period of achieving the purpose of the task group
<b>Membership:</b>	As determined by the ASC on the recommendation of the Assembly / Assembly General Secretary / Assembly Resourcing Unit (ARU)

#### Task Required:

1. Consult widely with LGBTIQ<sup>A+</sup> and other members of the Church in order to develop the wording of an official apology from the Uniting Church in Australia to LGBTIQ<sup>A+</sup> Australians for the Church's role in the silence, rejection, discrimination and stereotyping of LGBTIQ<sup>A+</sup> people, couples and families. When considering this, the task group will engage in a respectful process in developing an apology, which 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<sup>A+</sup> communities and the wider society.
2. ~~If timing is appropriate, bring~~ a proposal regarding an apology to the 167<sup>th</sup> Assembly (mid 2024). The best apology might be a "living apology" though this does not preclude a formal statement by the Assembly.
3. The apology might draw on, but not go beyond, existing statements, decisions and theological work that has been approved by either the Assembly or ASC in the past.

#### Expected Outcomes:

At the conclusion of its work the Task Group will:

1. Present ~~a Draft progress Reports~~ to the Assembly General Secretary outlining the directions the group is taking to the ASC ~~by March 2020 at regular intervals~~.
2. Present a Final Report including an executive summary and any proposals / recommendations for consideration at the 167<sup>th</sup> Assembly to the ASC by November 2020~~3~~.

~~Note: Should additional time be required to complete this process and it is evident that this will not be ready for consideration at the 16th Assembly, then future expected outcomes and a revised timeframe should be determined at the November 2020 ASC meeting.~~

#### How the task group will work:

1. Be grounded in the gospel and build upon the tradition of the Uniting Church in Australia.
2. Live out our covenant as First and Second Peoples.

3. Live out our commitment to being a multicultural church, oriented towards justice.
4. Embody an inclusive church where those of differing ability, age, gender, race, ~~and~~ sexuality and gender identity are welcomed
5. Ensure that the activities of the Task Group are consistent with the Basis of Union of the UCA, the Constitution and Regulations, and align with the current strategic priorities of the Assembly.
6. Consider how the work of the Task Group relates to other councils, agencies and groups within the UCA, and work collaboratively wherever possible.
7. Consider how the work of the Task Group relates to other bodies ecumenically and with other civil society organisation and work collaboratively wherever possible.
8. Where appropriate, conduct its work on the basis of rigorous, contemporary research and analysis.

**Membership as at July 2022:**

Lin Hatfield Dodds (Convenor)  
Wendy Hendry  
Rev Elizabeth Raine  
Rev Gordon Ramsay  
Graeme Randall  
Warren Talbot  
Rev Apelu Tielu

## **Attachment B**

### **Apology to LGBTIQ Australians Task Group**

#### **Project and Consultation Plan, 2021 – 2024**

##### **2021 – June 2022: Planning, preparation, and early consultations**

The Task Group (TG) has met on a monthly basis since October 2020. In addition to initial discussion of the Terms of Reference (ToR), and the interests and concerns of TG members, the following activities took place during 2021 and the first half of 2022:

- Worked with consultant theologians (Revd Dr Jione Havea, Revd Dr John Squires) to scope a Discussion Paper that would provide a context and biblical and theological rationale for a UCA apology, and a context for the work of the Task Group for UCA and diaspora readers..
- Discussion of Graeme Randall's s thesis on the psychology of apology for LGBTIQ people.
- Report to the ASC, including the appointment of new members. Lin and Graeme attended part of the ASC meeting and also met with General Secretaries to discuss actions to support people impacted by the Task Group's work across the UCA.
- Developed and approved pastoral principles for the work of the Task Group.
- Rev Dr Apwee Ting attended a meeting focussed on exploring diversity and inclusion and how the TG might work with the President to engage UCA National Conferences.
- UAICC Chairperson, Rev Mark Kickett, attended a TG meeting and discussed how we might engage the UAICC on a range of concerns. Mark invited representatives of the TG to participate in a UAICC gathering in 2022.ASC subsequently made funding available for this purpose.
- A second discussion was held with theologians to finalise the current Discussion Paper draft.
- The Convenor and one other member met with Synod General Secretaries again to update them and pursue the issue of UCA support for people impacted by the TG's work.
- The draft Discussion Paper was sent to President and Moderators prior to meeting with them.
- Meeting with the President and General Secretary concerning future plans.
- Meeting with a trans member of a UCA congregation.
- Discussed and agreed the need for a trans or other gender diverse person on the TG.
- Introduced the TG and its work at the Uniting Church LGBTIQ+ Network national conference, "Daring" as a first step to a wider consultation with LGBTIQA+ people in the Church.

## **July 2022 - August 2023 – major consultation period**

The Task Group's Terms of Reference require consultation with "LGBTIQ people, and other members of the Church"; to "live out our covenant as First and Second Peoples"; and to "live out our commitment to being a multicultural church".

### July 2022 meeting

In meeting: trans and gender diverse UCA members  
Submit final draft Discussion Paper and Project & Consultation Plan to ASC  
Participate in ASC meeting  
Finalise participation in UAICC gathering

### August 2022 meeting

In meeting - young people from the wider Uniting Church  
External: Tuggeranong Rainbow Congregation

### September 2022 meeting

In meeting: UnitingCare Australia leaders to enable broader community services network consultation  
External: WA Synod meeting (9-11 Sept)

### October 2022 meeting

In meeting – National Conferences  
External - Presbytery (from Synod of Victoria-Tasmania)

### November 2022 meeting

In meeting: Uniting Church LGBTIQ Network  
External - Presbytery (from Synod of South Australia)

### December 2022 meeting

No consultations.

Reflection on the year's work, revise and confirm plans for specific consultations in 2023.

2023 plans will be based on the results of consultations to date.

In broad terms priorities will continue to be: LGBTIQ people (including considerations for trans and other gender diverse people); LGBTIQ civil society organisations; UAICC; UCA National conferences; the wider Uniting Church; Moderators and General Secretaries.

## **September – December 2023 - Report writing**

Draft final report, including wording of an apology, for submission to the Assembly Standing Committee.

## **2024 – Report refinement**

ASC to advise the Task Group on further work to be undertaken, revisions, etc, in order for the final report to be circulated and presented to the Seventeenth Assembly (mid 2024).