



**Uniting Church in Australia**  
**ASSEMBLY**  
Assembly Standing Committee

**DOCUMENT 12**

Type of Paper (Information/Decision)	Information and Decision
Title	President's Report on Response to LGBTIQA+ Apology
Assembly or ASC Minute	23.09.03 request the President to consult with the Assembly Standing Committee members and others as appropriate regarding next steps, and to bring a report to the July 2023 meeting of the Assembly Standing Committee.
Consultation	Members of ASC Several LGBTIQA+ members of the Uniting Church Two congregational ministers Moderators President-elect General Secretary
Purpose	To report on consultation about how to respond to the need for a trauma informed approach to Apology to and provide the ASC with possible next steps.
Rationale & Findings Summary	<p>Everyone I spoke with supported the offering of an apology, although there was a lot of reluctance for this to be the subject of a debate at the 17<sup>th</sup> Assembly.</p> <p>Most people I consulted with do not want an apology and any supporting documents such as a theology of inclusion to be debated at the 17<sup>th</sup> Assembly.</p> <p>I see three ways to meet this. One, suggested by the Moderators would be for the ASC to approve the words of an apology and for this to be offered in the lead up to the 17<sup>th</sup> Assembly with a service during the Assembly to acknowledge the apology.</p> <p>A second way would be for the ASC to approve the apology and for this to be acknowledged with a service at the 17<sup>th</sup> Assembly, including any further steps.</p> <p>A third way forward is for an apology to be proposed at the 17<sup>th</sup> Assembly, with the Assembly debating the wording and approving an apology.</p> <p>Most people I consulted with said that an apology without actions to ensure we improve our inclusion of LGBTIQA+ people within the Uniting Church would not be worthwhile, and each option would require some action to be more inclusive of LGBTIQA+ people in the Uniting Church.</p>
Attachments	

Recommendations	That the Standing Committee : <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Receive the report.</li><li>2. Provide feedback regarding the report and the options offered, and agree on a way forward.</li></ol>
Submitted by	Sharon Hollis, President <a href="mailto:president@nat.uca.org.au">president@nat.uca.org.au</a> 0439 396 577

## **PRESIDENT'S REPORT ON RESPONSE TO LGBTIQA+ APOLOGY**

Every LGBTIQA+ member of the Uniting Church I consulted expressed concern about being the subject of yet more conversation and debate at the Assembly. Even if the words of an apology are agreed to the thought of a debate at Assembly is something they would not welcome and would find traumatizing and retraumatizing. Several of them asked was there another way for the apology to be developed and offered.

Most of the LGBTIQA+ people I talked to do not believe we need to make any further theological statements or documents about LGBTIQA+ people, rather we need to trust LGBTIQA+ members to continue to develop their own theological voices.

What most of them long for now is a Church that rejoices in their presence, celebrates the gifts they bring to the Uniting Church, publishes and reads the theology they write and is skilled in the pastoral care offered to members of the LGBTIQA+ people and their families.

If the Church offers an apology to LGBTIQA+ people and their families they also want the Church to show a commitment to being a more welcoming and inclusive community through action. Among the things they are looking for are:

- A commitment to improving pastoral care to LGBTIQA+ people through education. Most people I consulted with particularly mentioned the challenge of providing appropriate pastoral care to transgender and non-binary members of the Church.
- The development of some guidelines to enable the language used across the Uniting Church to be inclusive of gender diversity.
- Ways to celebrate their gifts and ministry.

The congregational ministers and the Moderators all thought it would be important to develop resources that enable pastoral leaders in congregations to be able to offer apologies to individuals when this was pastorally helpful. This apology could be offered to both LGBTIQA+ people and their family members. One minister spoke about the number of parents they had ministered to who have felt the need to hide the life of their child from people in the church for fear that those they worship with would reject or judge their child.

No one I spoke to believed that an apology should not be offered. Rather they wanted to find a way to offer the apology in ways that had the least risk of further traumatizing a community that has experienced trauma through the actions of the Church.

From these conversations, three options became apparent. Each of these options requires the Apology Task group to narrow the scope of their work to preparing an apology and to cease the work they are doing on the theological paper.

### **Option A:**

The ASC approves the words of an apology in this triennium and that this be offered in each Synod in a liturgy prior to the 17<sup>th</sup> Assembly, and for the 17<sup>th</sup> Assembly to include a service that both acknowledges the apology through lament and gives thanks for LGBTIQA+ members of the Uniting Church. All Moderators expressed a willingness to work with the Assembly to support the delivery of an apology in their Synod, and thought it should be noted that four Moderators will have concluded their term by the end of October. I have not consulted with any Moderators-elect.

Alongside the service at the Assembly there would need to be a report of actions the ASC had undertaken to support the LGBTIQ+ community in the Church or proposals about how this would happen in the next triennium.

#### **Option B:**

The ASC approves an apology in the lead up to the 17<sup>th</sup> Assembly and offers a service of acknowledgement of this apology during the 17<sup>th</sup> Assembly.

Alongside the service at the Assembly there would need to be a report of actions the ASC had undertaken to support the LGBTIQ+ community in the Church or proposals about how this would happen in the next triennium.

#### **Option C**

The ASC brings a proposal to the 17<sup>th</sup> Assembly with the words of an apology and, if the proposal is approved, a service of lament, confession and statement of inclusion of LGBTIQ+ people take place during the 17<sup>th</sup> Assembly.

Alongside the apology at the Assembly there would need to be a report of actions the ASC had undertaken to support the LGBTIQ+ community in the Church or proposals about how this would happen in the next triennium.

#### **Recommendations if option A is preferred**

That the ASC:

1. request the Apology to LGBTIQ+ Australians Task Group develop the words of an apology, in consultation with LGBTIQ+ members of the Uniting Church to bring to the November meeting of the ASC for approval.
2. request Apology to LGBTIQ+ Australians Task Group to work with the Transforming Worship Panel in consultation with LGBTIQ+ members of the Uniting Church to develop a liturgy that includes lament, confession and a statement of welcome of LGBTIQ+ people in the Uniting Church, that could be offered in each Synod and at the 17<sup>th</sup> Assembly.
3. request the President to work with the Moderators to deliver an apology to the LGBTIQ+ Australians and their families in each Synod before the 17<sup>th</sup> Assembly.
4. develop resources for trauma informed pastoral care, including trauma informed pastoral care of LGBTIQ+ people.
5. request the Apology to LGBTIQ+ Australians Task Group and the Transforming Worship Panel, in consultation with LGBTIQ+ members of the Uniting Church, to develop a resource for offering a personal apology to individuals and families for the silence, rejection, discrimination and stereotyping of LGBTIQ+ people.
6. further develop resources about inclusive language as it relates to gender and gender diverse peoples and promote these resources across the Uniting Church
7. explore the option of publishing, with accompanying commentary, all reports, papers and decisions made by the Uniting Church on human sexuality.

#### **Recommendations if Option B is preferred**

That the ASC:

1. request the Apology to LGBTIQA+ Australians Task Group to develop the words of an apology, in consultation with LGBTIQA+ members of the Uniting Church for ASC approval no later than March 2024
2. request the Apology to LGBTIQA+ Australians Task Group to work with the Transforming Worship Panel in consultation with LGBTIQA+ members of the Uniting Church to develop a liturgy that includes lament, confession and a statement of welcome of LGBTIQA+ people in the Uniting Church, that could be offered at the 17<sup>th</sup> Assembly.
3. develop resources for trauma informed pastoral care, including trauma informed pastoral care of LGBTIQA+ people.
4. request the Apology to LGBTIQA+ Australians Task Group and the Transforming Worship Panel, in consultation with LGBTIQA+ members of the Uniting Church, to develop a resource for offering a personal apology to individuals and families for the silence, rejection, discrimination and stereotyping of LGBTIQA+ people.
5. further develop resources about inclusive language as it relates to gender identity and promote these resources across the Uniting Church.
6. explore the option of publishing. with accompanying commentary, all reports, papers and decisions made by the Uniting Church on human sexuality.

**Recommendations if Option C is preferred.**

That the ASC:

1. request the Apology to LGBTIQA+ Australians Task Group to develop the words of an apology, in consultation with LGBTIQA+ members of the Uniting Church no later than March 2024 for approval at the 17<sup>th</sup> Assembly.
2. request the Apology to LGBTIQA+ Australians Task Group to work with the Transforming Worship Panel in consultation with LGBTIQA+ members of the Uniting Church to develop a liturgy that includes lament, apology and a statement of welcome of LGBTIQA+ people in the Uniting Church, that could be offered at the 17<sup>th</sup> Assembly, if the apology is approved.
3. develop resources for trauma informed pastoral care, including trauma informed pastoral care of LGBTIQA+ people.
4. request the Apology to LGBTIQA+ Australians Task Group and the Transforming Worship Panel, in consultation with LGBTIQA+ members of the Uniting Church, to develop a resource for offering a personal apology to individuals and families for the silence, rejection, discrimination and stereotyping of LGBTIQA+ people.
5. further develop resources about inclusive language as it relates to gender identity and promote these resources across the Uniting Church.
6. explore the option of publishing. with accompanying commentary, all reports, papers and decisions made by the Uniting Church on human sexuality.