



## **Pastoral Statement**

**Rev Sharon Hollis, President of the Uniting Church in Australia**

To Uniting Church in Australia members, congregations and faith communities

Dear friends in Christ,

As debate re-emerges on religious discrimination laws in Australia, I acknowledge the burden this will place on some members of our Uniting Church community.

I am aware renewed conversation on this matter will heighten the vulnerability of members of the LGBTIQ+ community, particularly LGBTIQ+ children and their families. I offer you my prayers and support.

The Uniting Church continues to maintain that any permissions given to religious organisations to discriminate must be carefully balanced against the rights of people to be free from discrimination and to live with dignity. The Assembly plans to continue this engagement and will be seeking ways to have our voice heard in the coming months.

In our most recent submission to the Australian Law Reform Commission, the Assembly supported changes that will increase protections for LGBTIQ+ students, staff and their families while enabling religious institutions to conduct themselves according to the doctrines, beliefs and teachings of their faith.

Our position is grounded in our belief that every person is entitled to live with dignity because they are made in God's image and that each person's life and rights need to be protected or we are all diminished.

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

I note with sadness not all LGBTIQ+ 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 at this time.

You may like to read more in our background paper to support your engagement on this issue.

Grace and Peace,

Rev Sharon Hollis

President of the Uniting Church in Australia Assembly

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

**QLIFE:** Specialist LGBTIQa+ support service. Free service, Australia-wide, 3pm - midnight, every day. Phone: 1800 184 527 and [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.