



## Sydney Presbytery

### 18 Affirmation for Transgender, Intersex and Non-binary People

That the Assembly resolve:

1. To reaffirm the Uniting Church's recognition that "every person is precious and entitled to live with dignity because they are God's children, and that each person's life and rights need to be protected or the human community (and its reflection of God) are diminished." (Eleventh Assembly, 2006.20.01)
2. To recognise that people of transgender and non-binary identity and expression, and intersex people, are beloved by God and full members of the Body of Christ.
3. To note with concern growing numbers of attacks on trans, non-binary and intersex people and organisations, and legislative measures to restrict the human rights and dignity of trans, non-binary, and intersex people.
4. To urge policy-makers and legislators to uphold the human rights and dignity of trans, non-binary and intersex people in policies, procedures and laws.
5. To encourage congregations and councils to welcome and celebrate trans, non-binary, and intersex people in all aspects of their life including worship, leadership, and social justice advocacy.
6. To encourage all Uniting Church affiliated schools, colleges and agencies to enable awareness and intentional support for transgender, non-binary and intersex people.
7. To request the Assembly Transforming Worship Circle to prepare:
  - (a) Guidelines for the use of language which welcomes and affirms trans, non-binary, and intersex people; and
  - (b) Prayers and a liturgy for use in local churches to welcome and celebrate the life and faith of trans, non-binary, and intersex people.

Proposer: Rev Adrian Sukumar White  
Seconder: Rev Hee Won Chang

#### Why is this important for the Church at this time?

The National Assembly of the Uniting Church has an opportunity through this proposal to continue the Churches pursuit of justice, equality, inclusion and relevancy.

Trans and gender diverse people continue to be marginalised in society, facing discrimination in many areas, and experience poor health outcomes and much higher rates



of suicide. The Uniting Church needs to move beyond general statements to more specific policies and actions.

Support for trans and gender diverse people has not been addressed by the Assembly to date and this set of proposals, presented by the Presbytery of Sydney, would lead the way for the wider Church.

Most vitally, these proposals would begin to affirm and empower the many gifts of the Church's trans and gender diverse members, offering a crucial contribution to our life and mission in our contemporary and pluralistic society.

### **Background and Rationale:**

1. Since the early 1980s the Uniting Church has spent considerable time in re-considering the understanding of human sexuality in general and homosexuality in particular.<sup>i</sup> This has frequently arisen because Congregations and Presbyteries have needed to make decisions about individual applicants or candidates for the ordained ministry who identified as lesbian, gay or bisexual.<sup>ii</sup>
2. Some documents have referred to 'LGBTIQ' people but there has been minimal consideration of the pastoral, biblical, theological and justice concerns raised by trans and gender diverse people, and intersex people. The current Assembly vision for a just Australia statement refers to all people being "equal and free" regardless of "sexual orientation or gender identity".<sup>iii</sup>
3. Although many Uniting Church members (as with Australians generally) are likely to know a lesbian or gay person, they are far less likely to know a trans, gender diverse or intersex person. This highlights the need for education and awareness including the development and use of prayers and liturgies.
4. Some people are uncertain about aspects of the evolving acronym, now often "LGBTIQA+". Information is included in the links below. A key point is that the LGBTIQA+ communities bring together people with three different (though sometimes overlapping) aspects of diversity – sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and physiological sex characteristics.<sup>iv</sup>
5. What is required now is a focus on the particular pastoral, educational and justice issues as they affect trans and other gender diverse people. In many Uniting Church discussions of sexuality openly lesbian and gay people have been included. There is a corresponding need for efforts to actively include, engage with and recognise trans and gender diverse people in the life of the Uniting Church.
6. Happily, we have been seeing the gradual emergence of trans and other gender people of faith, in the ordinary life of the Uniting Church and in many places across society. Intentionally affirming their gifts and theological and spiritual insights will build upon this, enable greater participation, and make a significant contribution to the Church's health and growth, especially among the first third of life.



7. If we are to make progress in this area of the church's life, then there will need to be a national reference or advisory group to work on these issues and encourage Congregations, Presbyteries and Synods to engage.

*Links:*

Assembly documents on sexuality are available at the illuminate site.  
<https://ucaassembly.recollect.net.au/>

A wide range of resources for people of faith and others can be found at Trans Spirit Flourishing. <https://www.transspirit.org/>

Gender & Scripture: [Gender Identity - YouTube](#)

The Uniting Church LGBTIQA+ Network have published 15 short resource documents for local churches including on gender diversity, conversion therapy and queer young people.  
<https://www.unitingnetworkaustralia.org/open-and-affirming-project/>

An online Australian Trans Hub, including social, medical and legal information, is supported by ACON. <https://www.transhub.org.au/>

[TransHub Talks: What Does Being 'Trans' Mean to Trans People - YouTube](#)

*Endnotes:*

---

<sup>i</sup> For a record of Assembly decisions on sexuality see Elenie Poulos and Cynthia Coghill, *For a World Reconciled*, Uniting Church Press, 2014.

<sup>ii</sup> For an outline see Warren Talbot, "LGBTIQ Pilgrims and the Uniting Church in Australia", in Robert W. Renton (Ed), *A Pilgrim People: Forty Years On*, (The proceedings of the inaugural Uniting Church national History Society Conference, June 9-12 2017, pp. 122-140.

<sup>iii</sup> Assembly, Uniting Church in Australia, *Our Vision for a Just Australia*, p.26.

<sup>iv</sup> LGBTQIA Resource Centre  
<https://lgbtqia.ucdavis.edu/educated/glossary#:~:text=LGBTQIA%2B%3A%20Abbreviation%20for%20Lesbian,the%20community%20as%20a%20whole.>

