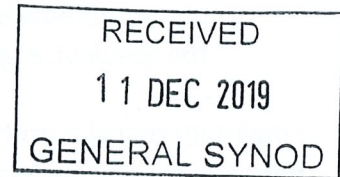


**SUBMISSION FROM DAVID SECCOMBE TO APPELLATE TRIBUNAL REGARDING THE
BLESSING OF SAME SEX MARRIAGES**

The Registrar
Appellate Tribunal
General Synod Office Anglican Church of Australia
189 Kent St
Sydney NSW 2000



11

appellatetribunal@anglican.org.au

Dear Registrar,

I am grateful for the opportunity to give a point of view in response to the submission of the Synod of the Diocese of Wangaratta. I am David Peter Seccombe BSc Hons, ThL (ACT), BD Hons (London), DipRE (MCD), PhD (Cantab), an ordained priest of the Anglican Church (Diocese of Perth). Besides a curacy, some short appointments and locums, I have been Rector of a Perth parish (St Matthews Shenton Park) for 14 years and been Principal of an Anglican theological college (George Whitefield College in Cape Town) for 20 years. My submission is as follows.

Primate's Reference to the Appellate Tribunal – Blessing of Persons Married According to the Marriage Act 1961 Regulations 2019 (Diocese of Wangaratta)

In answer to the questions referred to the Appellate Tribunal I submit

The Blessing of Persons Married According to the Marriage Act 1961 Regulations 2019 made by the Synod of the Diocese of Wangaratta is **inconsistent** with the Fundamental Declarations and Ruling Principles in the Constitution of the Anglican Church of Australia.

The regulation is **not validly made** pursuant to the Canon Concerning Services 1992.

To both questions I answer that the regulation, insofar as it is applied to the blessing of “marriages” of persons of the same sex and/or gender, proposes to bless what is contrary to God’s law and Christ’s gospel, and, as such, is against the fundamental declarations (Fundamental Declarations [1.2, 3]), and inconsistent with the teaching of the Book of Common Prayer (Ruling Principles [1.4]),

There are many aspects of this issue, which, I am certain, will be addressed by others. I will address just one, that has proved controversial and troublesome, and affects some fundamental understandings.

Article 7 of the Thirty Nine Articles of Religion speaks of the Law and Commandments of God. In the context of declaring the agreement of Old and New Testaments it states:

Although the Law given from God by Moses, as touching Ceremonies and Rites do not bind Christian men, nor the Civil precepts thereof ought of necessity to be received in any commonwealth; yet notwithstanding, no Christian man whatsoever is free from the obedience of the Commandments which are called Moral.

I maintain that the prohibition of sodomy, both in the Old Testament and the New, is, and has always been understood in the Church, to fall neither into the ceremonial nor civil category, but to be a commandment of God and part of his moral Law.

A synod resolution whose intention or effect is to imply God's allowance (even blessing) of such behaviour would, therefore, be contrary to the law of God.

Furthermore, since the New Testament declares that such behaviour, unrepented, bars a person from the kingdom of God (1 Cor 6.9-11), such a resolution becomes a gospel matter. Encouragement of such behaviour endangers vulnerable people's inheriting eternal life, and becomes for whoever promotes such encouragement, an offense such as Jesus warns against in the passage about the millstone (Matt 18.6; Mk 9.42; Luke 17.2).

I would submit, therefore, that legal services of blessing for same-sex 'marriages' in our Church would throw us into contempt of God's Law, Commandments and Gospel.

Further, such would inevitably lead to serious disorder in the Church, in that many Christian people, including many ministers of the Church, would dispute their synod's right to legislate contrary to God's law and gospel (and the Appellate Tribunal's right) and would be placed in a situation where they would be unable to acknowledge their synod's authority, and their bishop's spiritual oversight.

Further, such would destroy our claim to be a truly catholic and apostolic church, bring our Church into conflict with many orthodox churches, including the Roman Catholic Church, and, leave these churches dangerously exposed to community and governmental pressure.

Furthermore, since recourse to the law of God is often countered by a facile reference to slavery ('the Bible allows slavery), I would wish to add:

That this is a false comparison.

That what Scripture sometimes allows (like divorce, 'because of your hardness of heart' (Mark 10.5)), in no ways allows the laws of God to be discounted and overridden.

That God's definitive act in the Old Testament was a liberation of his people from slavery.

That the redemption effected by the Son of God was also an act of liberation.

And that the tenor of Holy Scripture is that God is at work to redeem his creation from the bondage into which it has fallen through sin.

I therefore humbly request that the Appellate Tribunal find this motion inconsistent with the beliefs of our Church (and *the* Church), and the Christian Faith.

Yours faithfully,

David Seccombe
11th December 2019