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IN THE APPELLATE TRIBUNAL
ANGLICAN CHURCH OF AUSTRALIA

IN THE MATTER of the questions referred by the Primate under Section 63(1) of the Constitution on 31 October 2019 and 6 November 2019

AND IN THE MATTER OF the *Clergy Discipline Ordinance 2019 Amending Ordinance 2019 (Diocese of Newcastle)*

SUBMISSIONS BY EQUAL VOICES LTD (ABN 68 617 131 781)

Introduction

1. Equal Voices Ltd (**Equal Voices**) is a national not-for-profit organisation supporting LGBTIQA+ Christians and allies in seeking an ‘equal place at the table’ for LGBTIQA+ people in the Church and the world. This submission is made on behalf of Equal Voices Anglican, a network within the national Equal Voices organisation. Equal Voices Anglican represents, according to official Australian Government statistics, an estimated 300 000 LGBTIQA+ people in the Anglican Church of Australia.¹ Of this group of people a substantial number would directly benefit, now or in the future, from new provisions such as the *Clergy Discipline Ordinance 2019 Amending Ordinance 2019 (The Ordinance)*.
2. Equal Voices seeks marriage equality for its members and believes this to be God’s loving will and intention. The Ordinance does represent a positive step forward in this area, but fails to offer marriage equality to LGBTIQA+ Anglicans. The Ordinance does not offer ritual and sacramental provisions that are available to other Anglicans and it fails to affirm the civil marriage and relationships of sexually and gender diverse people as equal gifts from God. Equal Voices acknowledges that the limited assistance The Ordinance gives to sexually and

¹ This is a conservative calculation, based on Anglican census figures (of more than 3 million Anglicans at the last census) and the findings of the Australian Federal Government’s Human Rights Commission ‘Face the Facts’ research, which shows at least 11 in 100 Australians identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex – see further: <https://www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/education/face-facts-lesbian-gay-bisexual-trans-and-intersex-people>

gender diverse people and others *is* a positive step forward. However, it is a highly restrained and conservative provision which does not adequately respond to the needs of the LGBTIQA+ Anglican community.

Summary of these submissions

3. Of the questions asked by the Bishop of Newcastle on 31 October 2019:

3.1. **Question 1** - It is not the role of the Appellate Tribunal to make a ruling on an area of doctrine as contested as the civil marriage of people of the same gender.

3.1.1. The Ordinance merely removes the ability to bring a charge against a member of the clergy who blesses or does not bless a civil marriage between people of the same gender, or who has entered into a civil marriage with a person of the same gender. It does not make such behaviour legal under the Constitution. If The Ordinance is found to have made no change to marriage doctrine, the answer to this question should be 'no'.

3.1.2. If The Ordinance is regarded as a change to the current doctrinal understanding of marriage, this question is outside the jurisdiction of the Appellate Tribunal. There is no clearly defined doctrine on marriage in the Anglican Church of Australia. Most sources of doctrine are silent on relationships between people of the same gender. If the question is answered, the answer to this question should be 'no'.

3.2. **Question 2** - The Synod of the Diocese of Newcastle does have authority to implement The Ordinance. The answer to this question should be 'yes'.

3.3. **Question 3** - Equal Voices has no submissions to make on this question.

4. Of the questions asked by 25 members of General Synod on 6 November 2019:
- 4.1. **Question 1** - The only charges that are prevented are charges brought because a member of the clergy has blessed or did not bless a civil marriage between people of the same gender, or where they themselves have entered into a civil marriage with a person of the same gender. Outside of this a charge can still be brought. The answer to this question should be 'yes, dependent on the specific circumstance'.
 - 4.2. **Question 2** - If the charge of an act of unchastity or an offence of sexual misconduct amounts to more than the accused person having been in a marital relationship with a person of the same gender, or having blessed or not blessed a civil marriage between people of the same gender, the charge can still be brought. The answer to this question should be 'no'.
 - 4.3. **Question 3** - The Ordinance prevents charges brought because a member of the clergy has blessed or did not bless a civil marriage between people of the same gender, or where they themselves have entered into a civil marriage with a person of the same gender. The answer to this question should be 'yes'.
 - 4.4. **Question 4** - The Synod of the Diocese of Newcastle did approve The Ordinance and has not made provisions for the Provincial Tribunal to have original jurisdiction in this circumstance, if the Diocesan Bishop gives assent to The Ordinance the answer to this question should be 'yes'.
 - 4.5. **Question 5** - Where a charge relates to a civil marriage between people of the same gender but has not arisen solely because of the blessing of that civil marriage or a member of clergy entering into a civil marriage with a person of the same gender, a charge can still be brought to the Diocesan Tribunal. If this is the case and the Synod of the Diocese of Newcastle has made provisions for a charge to be heard by the Provincial Tribunal the charge could still proceed in the original jurisdiction of the

Provincial Tribunal. The answer to this question should be ‘no, dependent on the specific circumstance’.

5. Of particular concern is the nature of The Ordinance. As an amendment to the Clergy Discipline Ordinance 2019 it does not affirm marriage between people of the same gender, or affirm the blessing of such a marriage. Instead The Ordinance merely removes the ability to bring a charge against a person in relation to a marriage between people of the same gender.
6. The wording of The Ordinance implies that the blessing of such a marriage, or the act of a clergy member engaging in such a marriage, remains an offence under canon law. This sends a very clear and harmful message to the LGBTIQA+ members of the Anglican Church of Australia and the wider community. This will perpetuate the culture of shame and silence that currently exists for LGBTIQA+ Anglicans. While The Ordinance will permit members of the clergy in the Anglican Diocese of Newcastle to enter into a civil marriage with a person of the same gender, it will also continue to emphasise the inequality of LGBTIQA+ members of the Anglican Church. It is only in comparison to the wider Anglican Church that The Ordinance could be viewed as mildly affirming.
7. The issues relating to marriage equality and marriage doctrine in the Anglican Church of Australia are much wider conversations and are not impacted by The Ordinance. These matters go well beyond the jurisdiction of the Appellate Tribunal. In so far as the Appellate Tribunal is able to rule on the legal validity of The Ordinance, it should be found to be valid diocesan legislation.

Context

8. Equal Voices asks the Appellate Tribunal to deeply consider the difficult context in which it makes its decisions. In particular, Equal Voices notes the ongoing failure of the Anglican Church of Australia to listen to and honour LGBTIQA+ Anglicans as Gospel ‘little ones’, in accordance with the teaching of Jesus. Equal Voices requests that any deliberations on this matter are mindful of this and do

not exacerbate a continuing ecclesiastical culture of shame, secrecy and silence experienced by LGBTIQ+ Anglicans, to which The Ordinance offers some small redress.

9. Equal Voices notes that in relation to the issue of civil marriage between people of the same gender and marriage doctrine there has not been adequate space or acknowledgement given to the people most affected by these debates. This was evidenced in the absence of any open and community connected LGBTIQ+ contributors to *Marriage, Same-Sex Marriage and the Anglican Church of Australia*. Equal Voices further notes that it would appear few parties to this current matter are either members themselves or have consulted the LGBTIQ+ Anglican community.
10. Equal Voices refers the Appellate Tribunal to the *Open Letter of Anglican LGBTI+ Voices* for a fuller statement of this challenging context, its impact on LGBTIQ+ members of the Church, and its invitation to a more positive living together in the Anglican Church of Australia. The text of which can be found at **Appendix A** of this submission and/or online at <https://www.equalvoicesanglican.org/open-letter.html>.
11. Additionally, Equal Voices notes the current social and political climate caused by the intense drive of some religious forces in Australian politics to legislate for ongoing discrimination against LGBTIQ+ people by religious groups. This has had a very real impact on the spiritual, emotional and physical wellbeing of LGBTIQ+ people. Especially those who are members of faith communities. Equal Voices asks the Appellate Tribunal to consider how through its deliberations it may avoid reinforcing this debilitating climate and protect and care for the wellbeing of the LGBTIQ+ members of the Anglican Church of Australia.
12. In circumstances such as have arisen within this current matter and the contemporaneous matter of the *Blessing of Persons Married According to the Marriage Act 1961 Regulations 2019 (Wangaratta)*, Equal Voices is concerned

that some parties will attempt to use the Appellate Tribunal to debate the wider issue of the place of the LGBTIQA+ community in the Anglican Church. Equal Voices notes that these matters before the Appellate Tribunal relate only to the civil marriage of people of the same gender and do not allow for the voices of the rest of the community to be heard. Among other groups those who identify as transgender are unable to be represented in this matter.

13. Subsection 3c of The Ordinance highlights an ongoing concern within the clergy. In the Anglican Church of Australia there is a cultural expectation for clergy to be married. Much of the structure of Anglicanism in Australia is based on the assumption that a member of the clergy will have a spouse to provide a support system. By permitting the ordination of clergy who are not heterosexual and then denying them marriage, whether civil or sacramental, a culture of inequality is created. Many studies have shown that members of the LGBTIQA+ community experience poorer mental health compared to the wider community due to ongoing stigma. The Ordinance highlights a very clear pastoral concern which is currently impacting ordained clergy in the Anglican Church of Australia. This is a pastoral and spiritual issue that is, at best, only partially addressed by The Ordinance. It is a positive step forward and is currently the only legislation of its kind in Australia, but it does not meet the needs of the Anglican LGBTIQA+ community.

Question One asked by the Bishop of Newcastle on 31 October 2019

Is any part of the Clergy Discipline Ordinance 2019 Amendment Ordinance 2019 of the Diocese of Newcastle inconsistent with the Fundamental Declarations or the Ruling Principles of the Constitution of the Anglican Church of Australia?

14. The amendments to the *Clergy Discipline Ordinance 2019* make no changes to the current doctrinal understanding of marriage in the Anglican Church of Australia. The Ordinance does not affirm civil marriage between two people of the same gender, it only removes the option of bringing a charge or enacting disciplinary measures against a member of clergy who blesses, does not bless or

participates in such a civil marriage. The answer to this question should be ‘no’.

15. The essence of The Ordinance goes to civil disobedience. Sections 6.14 and 6.23 of *Faithfulness in Service* refer to civil disobedience and explicitly affirm such behaviour. The Ordinance does not affirm the civil marriage of people of the same gender, but it gives members of the clergy of the Diocese of Newcastle an avenue to act as their own conscience dictates in an area of doctrine that is ambiguous and heavily debated.

16. The Ordinance is consistent with the Fundamental Declarations and Ruling Principles of the Constitution of the Anglican Church of Australia. The Constitution was deliberately written to accommodate the diversity of Anglican tradition. As such, diversity of opinion is accepted and encouraged, excepting any matters essential to the nature and character of the Anglican Church as part of the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church. This is a common stance within Anglicanism, which has a wide variety of evidence supporting it including in Paul’s Epistle to the Ephesians 3:10 - *“Through the church the wisdom of God in its rich variety might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places”*. Subsections 3a and 3b of The Ordinance reflect this “rich variety” in their acceptance of diversity of opinion, ensuring that members of the clergy are free to make a decision of conscience on the blessing of civil marriages between people of the same gender.

17. The Fundamental Declarations and Ruling Principles of the Constitution speak to the purpose of the Anglican Church of Australia. The spirit and intent of these is to enable the Anglican Church of Australia to serve God and God’s people, both doctrinally and pastorally. In Australia there has been a significant change in societal attitudes towards sexuality and gender in recent years which has led to the passing of civil marriage equality legislation in 2017. This new affirmation and welcome of LGBTIQ+ people by wider society has not been reflected in the Anglican Church of Australia.

18. While The Ordinance does provide some benefit to the LGBTIQ+ community, it does not reflect the attitudes of the wider society. It fails to affirm members of the LGBTIQ+ community and continues to imply that the civil marriage of people of the same gender is an offence under canon law, even if The Ordinance prevents a charge being brought.
19. If The Ordinance is regarded as affirming marriage between people of the same gender it is still unlikely to contravene the Constitution. The Anglican Church of Australia has not defined its doctrine of marriage, nor has it defined the difference between civil and sacramental marriage.
20. Common sources of doctrine are unable to provide a definitive answer on marriage between people of the same gender. Some sources of doctrine such as the Creeds and the Thirty Nine Articles are entirely silent on marriage.
21. The 1662 Book of Common Prayer is a product of very different historical and cultural circumstances. It reflects culturally limited understandings of sex and gender which were drawn from the societal attitudes and legalities of the time. The Anglican Church of Australia faced a similar issue when deliberating on the doctrinal validity of the ordination of women. It was able to conclude that despite the ambiguity or silence of all sources of doctrine, women could be ordained in the Anglican church. While the issue of women's ordination and the issue of the civil marriage of people of the same gender are not equatable, the principle still applies.
22. There is very little Scriptural evidence which speaks against the civil marriage of, or relationships between, people of the same gender. Just six verses negatively reference such relationships. These are Genesis 19:4-11, Leviticus 18:22, Leviticus 20:13, Romans 1:26-27, 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 and 1 Timothy 1:8-10. All of these verses could be regarded as speaking against sexual abuse or against a specific sexual act, rather than the loving, respectful and faith filled marriage between two people of the same gender.

23. If these verses are believed to be speaking against sodomy, it does not make a case for the doctrinal invalidity of the civil marriage of people of the same gender. Such a sexual act is not confined to relationships between men. Even if the verses are believed to speak against sodomy and it was possible to make a case against any relationship between two men, it would then implicitly permit relationships between two women.
24. There is Scriptural evidence that could be read as supporting relationships and even marriage between people of the same gender. Matthew 19:12 can be read as affirming that people should live as they were born to live and accept who they are. In his First Letter to the Corinthians 7:8-9 Paul encourages Christians to remain celibate, and explicitly refers to heterosexual celibacy. Yet Paul also encourages people to marry if they need to "*for it is better to marry than to be aflame with passion*". In addition, throughout both the Old and New Testaments a range of relationships are described. Very few of these relationships could be regarded as loving, respectful and faith filled marriages. Perhaps the question to be debated is whether loving, respectful and faith filled heterosexual relationships are Scripturally supported.
25. While the Ordinance may be regarded as the first of its kind in Australia, the issue it touches on is not unique in the global Anglican Communion. Provinces in the United States of America, Scotland, New Zealand and Brazil have been able to legislate for blessing or sacramental marriage of people of the same gender. Compared to the work of some of these provinces The Ordinance is limited and very restrictive.
26. It is not the role of the Appellate Tribunal to make a ruling on an area of doctrine as contested as this. If The Ordinance is regarded as a change to the current doctrinal understanding of marriage, the Appellate Tribunal does not have the jurisdiction to answer this question. If The Ordinance is found to have made no change to marriage doctrine, the answer to this question should be 'no'.

Question Two asked by the Bishop of Newcastle on 31 October 2019

Does the Synod of the Diocese of Newcastle have the authority under section 51 of the Constitution to pass the Clergy Discipline Ordinance 2019 Amendment Ordinance 2019?

27. Dioceses are empowered by their own constitutions to make regulations for their own good order and governance. Whether such regulations fulfil this purpose is a matter of judgement for the Synod of that diocese. The answer to this question should be ‘yes’.

Question Three asked by the Bishop of Newcastle on 31 October 2019

Where an Ordinance is passed by a Synod of a Diocese in the Province of New South Wales and referred to the Appellate Tribunal prior to the Bishop giving her/his assent in accordance with Constitution 5(c) of the Schedule of the Anglican Church of Australia Constitution Act 1902, may the Bishop give assent to the Ordinance on receiving the opinion of the Appellate Tribunal or is the Synod required to pass the ordinance again?

28. Equal Voices has no further submissions to make on this particular question.

Question One asked by 25 members of General Synod on 6 November 2019

If the Ordinance comes into effect, will the amendment made by clause 3 of the Ordinance prevent the Diocesan Tribunal of the Diocese of Newcastle (the “Diocesan Tribunal”) from hearing and determining under section 54(2) of the Constitution a charge of breach of faith or discipline in respect of a person licensed by the Bishop of the Diocese of Newcastle (the “Bishop”), or any other person in holy orders resident in the Diocese of Newcastle (the “Diocese”), where the act giving rise to the charge relates to such a person marrying or being married to another person of the same sex?

29. A plain reading of the text of The Ordinance suggests that the only charge that is prevented is a charge which alleges an offence, breach or misconduct by a member of the clergy **because** that member of the clergy has participated in a service of blessing, has refused to participate in a service of blessing or has married a person of the same gender. Outside of this if the charge does not arise because of one of the three circumstances but is tangentially related to them, the charge can still be brought. The answer to this question should be 'yes, dependant on the specific circumstance'.

Question Two asked by 25 members of General Synod on 6 November 2019

If the Ordinance comes into effect, will the amendment made by clause 3 of the Ordinance prevent the Diocesan Tribunal from hearing a charge under section 54(2A) of the Constitution relating to an offence of unchastity or an offence involving sexual misconduct against a member of clergy where the act of the member of clergy which gave rise to the charge relates to the member of clergy marrying or being married to a person of the same sex, in circumstances where the act occurred in the Diocese or the member of clergy was licensed by the Bishop or was resident in the Diocese within two years before the charge was laid?

30. A plain reading of the text of The Ordinance suggests that the only charge that is prevented is a charge which alleges an offence, breach or misconduct by a member of the clergy **because** that member of the clergy has participated in a service of blessing, has refused to participate in a service of blessing or has married a person of the same gender. Outside of this if the charge does not arise because of one of these three circumstances but is tangentially related to them, the charge can still be brought. If the charge of an act of unchastity or an offence of sexual misconduct amounts to more than the accused person having been in a marital relationship with a person of the same gender, or having blessed a civil marriage between people of the same gender, the charge can still be brought. The answer to this question should be 'no'.

Question Three asked by 25 members of General Synod on 6 November 2019

If the Ordinance comes into effect, will the amendment made by clause 3 of the Ordinance prevent the Bishop or any five adult communicant members of this Church resident within the Diocese promoting a charge to the Diocesan Tribunal under section 54(3) of the Constitution against a person licensed by the Bishop or against any other person in holy orders resident in the Diocese alleging a breach of faith, ritual or ceremonial by such a person because that person has participated in a service in which they have pronounced the blessing of a marriage solemnised in accordance with the Marriage Act 1961 in which the persons being married are of the same sex (assuming the first proviso in section 54(3) has been fulfilled)?

31. A plain reading of the text of The Ordinance shows that the only charge that is prevented is a charge which alleges an offence, breach or misconduct by a member of the clergy **because** that member of the clergy has participated in a service of blessing, has refused to participate in a service of blessing or has married a person of the same gender. The answer to this question should be 'yes'.

Question Four asked by 25 members of General Synod on 6 November 2019

If the Ordinance comes into effect, will the amendment made by clause 3 of the Ordinance prevent the Bishop or any five adult communicant members of this Church resident within the Diocese promoting a charge to the Provincial Tribunal in its original jurisdiction under section 54(3) of the Constitution against a person licensed by the Bishop or against any other person in holy orders resident in the Diocese alleging a breach of faith, ritual or ceremonial by such a person because that person has participated in a service in which they have pronounced the blessing of a marriage solemnised in accordance with the Marriage Act 1961 in which the persons being married are of the same sex (and assuming the first proviso in section 54(3) has been fulfilled)?

32. A plain reading of the text of The Ordinance shows that the only charge that is prevented is a charge which alleges an offence, breach or misconduct by a member of the clergy **because** that member of the clergy has participated in a service of blessing, has refused to participate in a service of blessing or has married a person of the same gender. Under section 55(3) of the Constitution the Provincial Tribunal only has original jurisdiction “*provided that such original jurisdiction shall not be exercised except as prescribed by ordinance of the synod of the diocese*”. The Synod of the Diocese of Newcastle did approve the Ordinance and has not made provisions for the Provincial Tribunal to have original jurisdiction in this circumstance, if the Diocesan Bishop gives assent to The Ordinance the answer to this question should be ‘yes’.

Question Five asked by 25 members of General Synod on 6 November 2019

If the Ordinance comes into effect, will the amendment made by clause 3 of the Ordinance prevent a board of enquiry, appointed by ordinance of the Synod of the Diocese and in exercise of its function under the second proviso in section 54(3) of the Constitution, from allowing a charge relating to a breach of faith, ritual or ceremonial arising from an act mentioned in 1, 2, 3 or 4 above proceeding to be heard by the Diocesan Tribunal or the Provincial Tribunal in its original jurisdiction as a charge proper to be heard?

33. A plain reading of the text of The Ordinance shows that the only charge that is prevented is a charge which alleges an offence, breach or misconduct by a member of the clergy **because** that member of the clergy has participated in a service of blessing, has refused to participate in a service of blessing or has married a person of the same gender. Where a charge relates to a civil marriage between people of the same gender but has not arisen solely because of the blessing of that civil marriage or a member of clergy entering into a civil marriage with a person of the same gender, a charge can still be brought to the Diocesan Tribunal. If this is the case and the Synod of the Diocese of Newcastle has made provisions for a charge to be heard by the Provincial Tribunal the charge could still proceed in the original jurisdiction of the Provincial Tribunal.

The answer to this question should be 'no, dependent on the specific circumstance'.

Conclusion

The questions should therefore be answered as follows:

Of the questions asked by the Bishop of Newcastle on 31 October 2019:

Question 1 - 'no'

Question 2 - 'yes'

Question 3 - Equal Voices has no submission to make on this question.

Of the questions asked by 25 members of General Synod on 6 November 2019:

Question 1 - 'yes, dependant on the specific circumstance'

Question 2 - 'no'

Question 3 - 'yes'

Question 4 - 'yes'

Question 5 - 'no, dependent on the specific circumstance'



EMMA CLARK

on behalf of Equal Voices Ltd

6 January 2020

It's Time to Embrace Us

OPEN LETTER TO
THE ANGLICAN CHURCH OF AUSTRALIA
from Anglican LGBTI+ Voices

We speak out

We speak out today as deeply committed Anglicans who are also LGBTI+ (that is: Lesbian Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and other sexually and gender diverse) people. We speak out as your siblings who have personally suffered shame and silence because of our sexuality and/or gender. We speak out on behalf of so many other similar Anglicans who are still unable to speak due to fear and pain. We speak out of sorrow at the mistreatment of sexually and gender diverse people by the Church we love, but with hope and an invitation to renewed vision and relationships. We speak out so that everyone may at last be embraced with the love that God in Jesus Christ has for all of us.

We grieve

For *we grieve*. We grieve for the sins of homophobia and transphobia which continue to bedevil the Church, and in which we too, as members of it, are complicit. We grieve for so many lives which have been lost, hearts which have been broken, and precious souls which have been horribly marred. We grieve that the Church is adrift in the midst of today's sea-change in societal understanding and affirmation of sexually and gender diverse people. We grieve above all that the love of Christ is obscured by so much Christian hardness of heart and slowness to respond.

We protest

We protest the silencing, repression and denial of our religious and wider freedom. Some parts of the Anglican Church of Australia appear actively hostile. We therefore vigorously protest the exclusion of debate, and the resistance to the removal of religious privileges which impact on the health and welfare of LGBTI+

children, families, teachers and other church staff. We also protest the silence of so many other parts of our Church, the hesitant leadership that will not commit itself to us. Martin Luther King said that ‘In the End, we will remember not the words of our enemies but the silence of our friends.’ We feel this keenly. For whilst we give thanks to God for the wonderful examples of Australian Anglican inclusion - in the fine work of so many parishes, schools, welfare projects and individuals - we lament the profound corporate institutional inertia, and the pernicious silence and lack of empathy that persists towards us. ‘Nothing about us without us’ is a widely understood precept in our world today. Yet in our church ‘almost everything about us without us’ seems to be the rule. We therefore invite participation, the sharing of our experience and faith stories, and the development of affirming policies and education.

We respect difference

We profoundly respect difference, including the genuinely held views of other Anglicans who oppose us. We recognise that growth in theological understanding and change is complex. We approach with humility our common scriptures, tradition and reason. Yet, just as we cannot speak from the experience of others, we ask that we are heard, and our own difference valued. We ask that decades of affirming biblical interpretation and enquiry be honoured and options provided for liturgical blessings and for the sacrament of marriage for LGBTI+ people. We ask for our place at the table and full opportunity to use our God-given gifts.

We demand address of spiritual abuse

Above all, we demand address for the spiritual abuse faced by sexually and gender diverse people. The appalling revelations of child abuse in which our churches have been complicit should surely teach us about the horrific consequences of silencing and ignoring vulnerable people, and the vital importance of listening, transparency and restorative justice. Typically however, LGBTI+ Anglicans are ignored or kept at arms length, even when issues of huge importance to us are discussed or determined. Due to overt hostility, covert disapproval and

uncertainty, genuinely safe spaces are so often hard to find and many LGBTIQA Anglicans do not feel able to be themselves (the persons God loves so much) in church settings. Churches often talk about being 'welcoming' to us, but it is positive affirmation and empowerment - not mere toleration - at Christ's open table, that is required. For our sexualities and genders are not aspects of the Fall, but diverse expressions of the divine image and continuing divine creation and gifts to enlarge the life and freedom of all.

We speak out for our Faith

We speak out as faithful members of the Anglican Church of Australia. We speak out as Christians with different theological, ecclesiological and liturgical emphases, yet as one voice. We speak out with profound concern for the future of the Church whose credibility and mission are now at stake because of how it treats us and others on its margins. We believe the soul of Anglicanism is at stake in the way our lives and bodies are treated. For centuries, the best spirit of the Anglican tradition, being both Catholic and Reformed, has held profound differences in creative tension and approached new issues of human dignity (from the questioning of slavery to the emancipation of women) with attitudes of openness and reception. It is at the heart of the Anglican Reformation settlement that 'it is not necessary that Traditions and ceremonies be in all places one and utterly alike'. With such a spirit of generous love, the Anglican Communion has spread worldwide, taking different forms whilst holding to the essentials of faith. Today this is in jeopardy as a sectarian spirit of exclusion is among us, rejecting the fruitful developments of LGBTI+ affirmation in other parts of the Anglican Communion and leaving little or no place for differences among us in Australia. Like the Gentiles in the early Church, we wait in faith, hope and love for the recognition by others of God's equal calling to us, different in some aspects of lifestyle, but one in Christ. The Holy Spirit is doing great things among us and in the wider world through sexually and gender diverse people. We believe they can be as sources of renewal to a weary and defensive Church. Like the Gentiles in the early Church, we therefore call today's Peter and Paul to account, that we may all join as one in the transforming love of God. May those who have ears to hear, hear.

We call for repentance

We call for repentance by the Church for its part in the violence, abuse and lack of acceptance of LGBTIQ people. We call for a recognition of our full humanity and for equal participation in church and society. We call for a full gospel which embodies the good news Jesus brought to the poor and marginalised and which centres on God's grace, not narrow religious traditions of human law. We call for dignity, justice and renewal. May those who have ears to hear, hear.

Anglican LGBTI+ Voices is the confidential LGBTI+ network of Equal Voices

Anglicans:

a part of Equal Voices (the national movement of LGBTI+ Christians and allies)