



Anglican Church of Australia

House of Bishops' Statement in response to the Opinions of the Appellate Tribunal published 11 November 2020

This statement was agreed to at a meeting of the House of Bishops on 20 November 2020.

Members of the House of Bishops of the Anglican Church of Australia have heard and participated in the complex and often painful discussions about gender and sexual identity in recent years. We recognise that gender and sexuality are deeply significant in people's experience, their sense of identity, their lives and the loving relationships that shape and sustain them.

We express our gratitude to the members of the Appellate Tribunal for their investment of time and thought and for the many individuals and groups who have made submissions concerning decisions of the Synods of the Dioceses of Wangaratta and Newcastle to enable the liturgical blessing of couples who have been married according to the Marriage Act 1961, including same-sex couples.

We recognise that the Appellate Tribunal Opinions affirm it is possible for clergy, in some contexts, to exercise this ministry. It does not authorise Anglican clergy to officiate at weddings other than those between a man and a woman.

We recognise these are issues that affect people profoundly. Consequently, there will be a variety of deeply felt and sincerely held responses to the Appellate Tribunal Opinions. Members of the House of Bishops have variously received requests to restrain clergy from exercising this ministry and, on the other hand, to welcome the opportunity for this ministry. There is not a common voice. With pain we recognise that there is not a common mind on these issues within the House of Bishops. Yet we are of one heart and mind in love towards those with whom we disagree and in our desire to serve Christ and see God's kingdom grow.

The General Synod of the Anglican Church of Australia, expected to meet in May-June 2021, will have the opportunity to address these issues as can Diocesan Synods and Councils.

In light of the above, this meeting of the House of Bishops calls all people, including ourselves, to holiness of life, and we resolve:

- a. to seek to speak the truth in love, mindful of Jesus' prayer for His followers in John 17. In particular, we will publicly acknowledge areas of agreement as well as disagreement among us;
- b. to engage with our Diocesan Synods and Councils as they consider the Opinions and any implications for their life and witness;

- c. to prepare for the General Synod thoughtfully and prayerfully so we might have informed and careful discussions and debates;
- d. to urge clergy within our dioceses to manifest the fruit of the Spirit in considering whether or how to bless those married according to the Marriage Act 1961;
- e. to care for all people in our dioceses affected by these issues including those who identify as LGBTIQ+;
- f. to care for people who are questioning their ongoing participation in this Church for whatever reason.

We call upon all members of the Anglican Church of Australia to join us in prayer that we might be sustained by the Holy Spirit in unity, truth and holiness for the glory of God and the wellbeing of the world Christ calls us to serve.