

Responding to Recent Changes in the Marriage Act

We, the bishops of the Anglican Church of Australia, affirm the following.

Guiding principles

1. The doctrine of this Church is that marriage is a lifelong union between a man and a woman. If we as a Church are to change this doctrine to permit same-sex marriage, the appropriate mechanism is through the framework of the Constitution and Canons of the Anglican Church of Australia. Bishops should give leadership in demonstrating trust in this framework as the way to move forward together, recognising that this will require care, persistence and generosity. The bishops commit to working together to manifest and maintain unity, as we together discern the truth.
2. The bishops commit to act within the framework of the Constitution and Canons of this Church, and to encourage those under their episcopal oversight to do so.
3. We affirm the need for humility and graciousness in discerning the way forward on these issues, recognising that there are complex interactions among the theological, pastoral and missional dimensions to these questions. We recognise that these are challenging matters, which resist simple solutions or courses of action.

Pastoral

4. All people are made in the image of God, loved by God and welcome in the community of God's people. We earnestly desire that all people hear and respond to God's word and receive the grace of the sacraments.
5. We affirm the responsibility of ministers to pray with and care for same-sex couples in informal settings. Bishops trust that ministers will exercise discretion in their pastoral care for same-sex couples, acting in accordance with the doctrine and discipline of this Church.

Liturgy

6. At this time there is no authorised liturgical recognition for a same-sex marriage (under the *Marriage Act 1961*) or for the blessing of a same-sex union.
7. We note that the Doctrine Commission is presently developing material to guide this Church in its discussion of marriage, same-sex marriage, blessing and related matters.

Buildings

8. Bishops should make enquiries as to existing legal constraints on the use of church property in their dioceses, whether from trusts, ordinances or otherwise. Bishops should also make enquiries as to their powers to restrict or otherwise direct the use of church property.
9. In light of this Church's doctrine of marriage, it is not appropriate for church buildings and halls, and chapels owned by Anglican schools and other Anglican organisations to be used as venues for same-sex marriages.