

MEDIA RELEASE

To: Editor
From: Uniting Church WA

13 September 2021

Uniting Church WA calls to protect LGBTQA+ community from harmful 'conversion therapies'

The Uniting Church WA calls on the Western Australian Government to work closely with the LGBTQA+ community and survivors of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Change Efforts (SOGICE), including people of faith, to introduce legislation to protect people from harmful 'conversion therapies'.

This practice, which encourages efforts to directly and indirectly attempt to change or suppress a person's sexuality or gender identity, has caused serious, ongoing, and tragic harm to those affected.

Most organisations that were established for this direct purpose have disbanded and issued apologies to those they harmed. However, there are still people and groups engaging in unregulated versions of the same activities.

The church has also agreed that the Christian practices of prayer and pastoral care, while important practices within the church, should not be used to harm or condemn any people, including LGBTQA+ people.

The Uniting Church in Australia has had a long engagement with topics relating to sexuality and gender, holding a diversity of views within its membership.

The Uniting Church WA recognises that the church is not always a safe place for LGBTQA+ people, and is therefore providing its congregations, schools and agencies opportunities to undertake an education and self-reflection process regarding LGBTQA+ conversion ideology and practice, to prevent future harm to people's mental health and wellbeing.

A study by LGBTIQ Health has found that a 'disproportionate number of LGBTIQ Australians experience poorer mental health outcomes and have higher risk of suicidal behaviours than their peers. These health outcomes are directly related to experiences of stigma, prejudice, discrimination and abuse based on being LGBTIQ.'

Mark Brisbane, Chair of the Uniting Church WA Social Justice Commission said, "The Uniting Church WA believes that every person is precious and entitled to love with dignity. It is this belief which forms the church's call to work towards a vision of doing no further harm."

More than 100 lay and ordained members elected from Uniting Church WA congregations, Good Sammy's, Juniper, Uniting WA, MLC, Penrhos College, PLC, Scotch College, St Stephen's School, Tranby College, Wesley College and Trinity Residential College came together for fellowship and to discuss issues of importance in the life of the church and the wider community at the 45th Annual Meeting of the Synod of WA, held over the weekend.

Ends

For media enquiries and interviews, please contact Marketing and Communications Manager, Maggie Johns on 0419 831 576.



Uniting Church in Australia
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