

A Call for Healing from Australian Catholics

Declaration of Result:

The postal survey on changing the civil Marriage Act has resulted in a majority voting 'YES' to the change. Many people, including Australian Catholics have invested much personally in the survey and the strategies around the process. However, it is the people who were spoken *about*, our Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) siblings, who have been hurt the most. Not only were they subjected to a great deal of painful language about them, but it was mostly non-LGBTI people speaking *about* them creating the pain of double silencing.

Love - God's gift

The long protracted campaign to decide on changes to the Marriage Act has produced many stories by Australian Catholics and their loved ones, stories about dignity and faith, stories about the love between same-gender couples and that of their family members, colleagues and friends who love them and support them. These stories hold the wondrous gift of God's love.

Divisive process

Unfortunately the survey process also produced stories of fear and untruths told *about* our LGBTI siblings. The polarising campaign has revealed a level of hate and prejudice toward LGBTI citizens like we have not seen in this country for a long time. This has caused division within families, the fracturing of relationships amongst friends, neighbours, colleagues and fellow parishioners. For this we grieve.

History of hate

Many Australian Catholics lament the church's role in the damage done to their LGBTI siblings both within the church and in Australian society. That history of violence, injury and public humiliation is now part of that historical record. What is even more saddening is the public homophobia and transphobia on display in the postal survey.

Gratitude and lament

We give thanks for the many pastorally astute Australian Catholic voices coming from various part of the Catholic community, including that of clergy, religious, lay leaders and the bishops who spoke lovingly and affirmingly of LGBTI people. It is also no secret that some of the loudest voices of diminishment of our LGBTI siblings came from parts of the institutional church. There is now a widely held perception in our society that the institutional churches in Australia remain insensitive, even hostile, towards LGBTI persons and their loved ones, and sometimes campaign against their civil and human rights. Such a perception is damaging to LGBTI Catholics, their loved ones, and to the body of the church in Australia as a whole.

Healing & Reconciliation

We recognises the joy and the pain in LGBTI Australians and all Australians at this time. We especially are concerned for the way in which the churches contributed to this pain. We realise it's time to bring Australians together to rebuild our community and we hope that there will be opportunities for all Australians to find times for healing and reconciliation.

Services of Healing & Reconciliation

Christian churches around Australia who've affirmed the dignity and civil rights of Australians throughout the postal survey are holding Services of Healing & Reconciliation to affirm LGBTI peoples and their families through this bruising process.

Rainbow Catholics InterAgency for Ministry is supporting a service for healing and reconciliation within the Australian community after the hurtful process of the postal survey to be held at St Joseph's Catholic Church, Newtown NSW on November 17 at 8pm. This will be conducted within the regular Friday night parish Mass which supports LGBTI Catholics, their families and friends.

We seek to support ways to move on from the survey to implement the changes to the Marriage Act that will include all Australians who choose to marry without added discrimination. There is no more important time to reach out in friendship and rebuild relationships that have been hurt in this process. Let us be in prayerful solidarity with those who grieve the outcome and commit ourselves to building a kinder, more just and compassionate Australia that ensure that all people are loved and cared for.

In Peace,

CATHOLICS SPEAK OUT

RAINBOW CATHOLICS INTERAGENCY FOR MINISTRY

SUPPORTIVE CATHOLIC PARENTS & FAMILIES NETWORK

AUSTRALIAN CATHOLICS FOR EQUALITY

AFFIRMING RELIGIOUS CATHOLIC TASKFORCE

INCLUSIVE PARISHES & SCHOOLS WORKING GROUP

CATHOLICS FOR RENEWAL (CATH#R)

ACCEPTANCE SYDNEY

ACCEPTANCE MELBOURNE

ACCEPTANCE CANBERRA

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