



The Most Reverend Roger Herft
Archbishop of Perth



STATEMENT
THE MOST REVEREND ROGER HERFT AM
ARCHBISHOP OF PERTH
8 October 2013

SYNOD MOTION – HUMAN SEXUALITY

The Anglican Church in the Diocese of Perth is an inclusive church. Married, divorced, single, gay, lesbian and people of other sexual orientations are welcome in parishes in this diocese. In fact, there are gay and lesbian clergy serving in the priesthood. They are licensed by me and are honoured and respected as priests who serve as others do with integrity and holiness.

Lay people who identify as gay and lesbian are welcome in our churches. Some of them bring their children for baptism and are warmly welcomed into our parishes. There are particular parishes in which special services are held for gay/lesbian/transsexual persons, their partners, parents, siblings and supporters.

I have promised to stand firm against any discrimination or phobia exhibited against persons who identify as gay and lesbian.

The church is like parliament in that it has checks and balances at various levels with clergy, laity and bishops having input into a final decision. The Synod is but one level, and as the governing body of the Diocese of Perth, it must exercise due care in the resolutions that are passed. That is why when the motion came before the Synod in 2012 I dissented from this resolution giving reasons for this. It has been raised again, but what does the resolution actually say:

“That this Synod:

- 1 recognises diversity within the Diocese of Perth, both in our sexual identities and in our theologies of human sexuality;
- 2 note the support from many within the Anglican Church for committed same-sex couples being able to register their relationships as ‘civil unions’ in Australia; and
- 3 acknowledges that legal recognition of committed same-sex relationships may coexist with legal recognition of marriage between a man and a woman.”

I believe the first part is theologically flawed and has serious consequences in terms of the message it proclaims.



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Our primary identity and place before God is not sexual. We are sexual beings but this is not the sum total of who we are.

There is a further difficulty with the open-ended recognition of diverse theologies and sexual identities. The Royal Commission has made us more aware of how careful we must be with our actions, our words, and our legislative language.

There are priests who have used the concept of diversity to justify their abuse of another person. It is ordinarily inappropriate for a governing body to be so general in its wording in this way.

The second part of the motion notes support for civil unions for same-sex couples. An in-principle support for civil unions might be recognised as an important step for gay and lesbian people. However, the difficulty in Western Australia is that this legislation has not been passed by parliament. For synod to endorse legislation it has not seen is fraught with difficulty.

The third part of the motion claims that the legal recognition of committed same-sex relationships may co-exist with the legal recognition of marriage between a man and a woman. We have no legislation that has been passed at a federal and state level to know what the legislation looks like, but the words “legal recognition of committed same-sex relationships” may be seen to include the recognition of same-sex marriage.

This part of the motion, in the context of the motion as a whole, is likely to have unintended consequences in terms of the Fundamental Declarations of our church regarding the Sacrament of Marriage.

These matters require further consideration and I will inform the synod within the next 30 days of my decision.