



Freedom to Decide on Marriage

The 15th Assembly of the Uniting Church in Australia has agreed to hold two equal and distinct views on marriage to honour the diversity of Christian belief among its members.

Meeting for the first time since last year's change to Australian marriage laws, members of the Church's national decision-making body, the Assembly, resolved to allow its ministers the freedom to conduct or to refuse to conduct same-gender marriages.

"This decision follows many years of reflection, prayer and discernment, and I want to thank Assembly members for the way they have responded with grace to what is a difficult conversation for many people of faith," said Uniting Church President Dr Deidre Palmer.

Dr Palmer acknowledged the ministry and struggle of LGBTIQ people in the Uniting Church over many years.

"I know that this conversation is painful and difficult for you," said Dr Palmer, directly addressing LGBTIQ Church members.

"We also acknowledge those who for whatever reason have not been able to support this change – and your pain and difficulty in this space."

"Please rest assured that your rights to follow your beliefs on marriage will be respected and protected."

"I thank you all for modelling a loving Christian community, holding together and caring for each other, across our diversity of strongly and faithfully held views."

Members of the Uniting Church's 15th triennial Assembly have been considering the change to the marriage policy and other issues since Sunday 7 July at Melbourne's Box Hill Town Hall.

During the meeting, they heard advice from theological and legal experts and had the opportunity to speak to proposals for and against the changes.

The proposal that was adopted on Marriage and same-gender relationships seeks to accommodate a range of views by adopting an additional statement of belief.

The existing statement of belief is that "marriage for Christians is the freely given consent and commitment in public and before God of a man and a woman to live together for life."

The new additional statement of belief says that, "marriage for Christians is the freely given consent and commitment in public and before God of two people to live together for life."

The proposal also acknowledges the diversity of religious beliefs and ethical understandings within the Church, and that they have been "developed through continuing faithful discernment and held with integrity on matters relating to sexuality and marriage."

