



# THE ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF GRAFTON

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28 June 2019

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

## Reflections on Grafton Synod 2019

I write as a follow up to our recent Diocesan Synod. I thank all Synod members for the respectful way that the debates were conducted and for your patience with me as I learned the ropes of Chairing a synod. I know that some of our discussions were challenging for many. Given the contentious nature of current issues such as human sexuality, there will continue to be awkward discussions in future years.

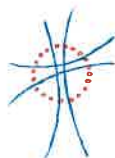
Some were perplexed that Synod did **not** pass the Motion (27) which stated: *That this Synod affirms the authorised standard of worship and doctrine of the Anglican Church of Australia as set out in the Fundamental Declarations and Ruling principles of the Constitution.* Not surprisingly, once word of this got out, there was some discussion about it on social media, where I was at pains to point out:

*To clarify: the synod did not withdraw anything. The diocese continues to affirm the constitution and fundamental declarations. However, the synod decided against passing a motion that reaffirms these as they were not convinced of the need to affirm it again and again.*

*It's a bit like ordination vows. If a clergyperson decides not to go to the reaffirmation of vows service in a particular year it does not mean they have rejected their vows, simply that they did not feel the need to reaffirm the vows.*

Just in case there is any doubt about this I need to clarify that the authorised standard of worship and doctrine of the Anglican Church of Australia is set out in the Fundamental Declarations and Ruling principles of the Constitution. If you hold a Bishop's Licence you will have signed Oaths and Declarations affirming this. If you are not already familiar with the Constitution, please read through the documents at: <https://anglican.org.au/governance/constitution/>

On a related note, two members of Synod moved a motion, which was passed by a majority, asking that General Synod in 2020 consider developing liturgies for the Blessing of Same Sex Marriages. *To assume, on the basis of this motion, that we are now offering such blessings in Grafton Diocese is ludicrous. As previously stated on numerous occasions, in accordance with the Bishops' Agreement of 2018, I have not authorised any form of liturgical recognition for a same-sex marriage or for the blessing of a same-sex union.* These matters will be considered at General Synod 2020, but even then a final decision might not be made until a future year.



In this vein, I thank The Rev'd David Hanger for drawing our attention to the online version of the book of essays *Marriage, Same Sex Marriage and the Anglican Church of Australia: essays from the Doctrine Commission*. I had only seen the draft version and was unaware that it was now being made widely available. I encourage you to download the free PDF version at:

<https://www.broughtonpublishing.com.au/marriagedoctrineessays/>

For the hard copy, visit Garratt Publishing:

<https://garrattpublishing.com.au/product/9780648265948/> (RRP approx \$35 and not yet in stock).

I suggest that you read the whole thing, not just the essays that articulate your current position. As Dr Jonathan Holland states in the Introduction, even the Doctrine Commission members found putting the essays together to be as much a listening process as an articulation of ideas. Try to at least understand the position that is opposite to the one that you already hold. What did you learn about the other's position that you didn't already know? Are there any insights at all from that position that you found to be of merit? I will be interested to hear what new insights you have about your own and other standpoints after reading the book of essays.

These are weighty matters and I know that some of you are struggling as we grapple with them as a church. From a personal point of view, I'm still working through these issues, quite apart from trying to discern what they imply for my actions and decision making as a Bishop.

It might be helpful to discuss your thoughts, feelings and ongoing reflections about these matters with your Professional Supervisor and your Spiritual Director.

On the negative side, it was disappointing that a Synod member chose to share Synod Motions, Questions and Answers (the whole Synod Recap booklet) on Social Media, including the sharing of the text of my email that specifically asked that this not be done. Amongst other things, this resulted in the names of those mentioned in questions and the names of Movers and Seconders being made public. At least two people were then harassed on Social Media as a result. While not contravening the Standing Orders, I see these actions as a breach of Faithfulness in Service and our Social Media Policy, both of which apply to Synod Members. Bishop in Council will need to address this.

Yours in Christ



Dr Murray Harvey  
**Bishop of Grafton**

