



# *The Anglican Diocese of Newcastle*

The Right Reverend Gregory Thompson  
Bishop of Newcastle

## **Bishop Greg Thompson**

Religious communities experience the discussion of same-sex marriage as both complex and confronting because they are dealing with traditions which have for thousands of years opposed intimacy between people of the same gender. The present traditional teaching of the Anglican Church is that sexual intimacy should be limited to marriage that is a lifelong union between a male and a female.

The Anglican Church is committed to listening to the experience of people who know they are gay or lesbian. As I speak with Anglicans I know that they are very attentive to the experience of family, friends and colleagues for whom traditional patterns of family life and intimacy have been places of trauma rather than hope and love. They are listening for how we recognise the deep longing by people to have their unions affirmed and celebrated.

As Anglicans, we affirm the importance of the parliament and the wider community exploring questions of justice and the right ordering of society for the well-being of all citizens. There is too much in our history as a nation of discrimination and abuse which church and institutions are called to face and correct. Gay and lesbian people have been treated with harshness and intolerance. Our shared responsibility as Australian citizens is to create a way of life that respects difference and in which people flourish.

I do not anticipate that the Anglican Church will change any of its formal positions quickly, if at all. However I am comforted by the respect that the parliament has shown in the past by acknowledging present religious freedoms which ensure religious communities are not compelled to do anything outside of their conscience. From time to time, the parliament will have to consider whether the religious conscience is the right view to impose on citizens and I welcome the debate.

17 August 2015