

# Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle LGBTIQ Catholic Forum

## Guidelines *as at 21 Feb 2021*

The Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle LGBTIQ Catholic Forum promotes the dignity of each person and supports them in their development to be the person God calls them to be.

### The purpose of the Forum is:

- listen, learn from and journey with the LGBTIQ people who are members of the parishes and workers within the schools, welfare and other shared services within the Diocese of Maitland Newcastle;
- assist Church members to better understand, include and minister to LGBTIQ people and their families;
- hold workshops and produce resources to assist Church members to better understand, include and minister to LGBTIQ people and their families;
- host social gatherings for peer support of LGBTIQ people, their families, friends, and brothers and sisters in faith;
- provide pastoral support to the LGBTIQ people; their families, friends/support network;
- support LGBTIQ people, their families, friends, and brothers and sisters to grow in faith; and
- arrange liturgies/retreats for LGBTIQ people, their families, friends, and brothers and sisters in faith.

### Principles guiding the Forum:

- The Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle and the LGBTIQ Catholic Forum have much in common and respect each other's unique identity/role/voice and are committed to working together. The Diocese will be fully informed of and has final say over those resources which it owns e.g., the Forum email address and Forum page on the Diocesan website.
- The Forum aims to involve as many of its members as possible in decision making.
- The Forum will try to make decisions by consensus but if this is not possible then decisions are those supported by more than half of Forum members at a meeting
- The Forum aims to provide as much information about Forum issues as possible to all of its members.
- The Forum will seek gender and other diversity in appointing people to roles.
- Roles within the Forum are ministries of service not control.
- Forum activities will be at times, places and a cost that suits all or as many Forum members as possible.
- The Forum invites all of its members to contribute their time and skills in whatever way they can.
- The privacy of Forum members is respected and protected.

### Structure of the Forum

Forum membership is open to all people – LGBTIQ people their families, friends/support network and supportive members of the Church. A person becomes a member of the Forum by completing a Membership Form (see attachment one).

A person can end their membership of the Forum at any time either via email or in a Forum meeting.

The Forum would only end a person's membership if their words/behaviour were against the Forum's purpose and principles (see Membership Form).

The Forum holds regular meetings which also involve a meal and socialising. Attendance at these meetings is open to anyone.

These regular meetings are the place where information is shared and where decisions are made.

The Forum will provide a position description for any roles e.g., Secretary (Attachment two) and Email Address Coordinator (Attachment Three)

Electing Forum members to specific roles takes place at regular meetings.

Any meeting of the Forum can overrule decisions made by a previous meeting of the Forum.

The Secretary will ensure that meetings are advertised to all Forum members and that a record of meetings is sent to all Forum members.

The Secretary will call a meeting of all Forum members if requested by at least three Forum members.

Notice before meetings and a record of the meeting is emailed to Members of the Forum.

The Forum is not incorporated and has no funds. Members are responsible for themselves. Members contribute any activity funds if they have chosen to participate and at the amount they have agreed to contribute.

### Forum decision making matrix

| No. | Matter  | Secretary or Email Address Coordinator | All those at any scheduled Forum meeting                         | All members of the Forum at a specifically called meeting        | Each Forum member                   |
|-----|---|--|--|--|-------------------------------------|
| 1.  | Accepting new Members of the Forum  | No role                                | Anyone who completes a Membership form is automatically accepted | Anyone who completes a Membership form is automatically accepted | Each applicant decides for themself |
| 2.  | Remind a Member of Forum purpose and principles   | Will do if no one else will            | Anyone can – if done with respect                                | Anyone can – if done with respect                                | Anyone can – if done with respect   |
| 3.  | Expel a Member  | Can ask a meeting to decide            | Most likely place for this decision                              | Can decide   | Can ask a meeting to decide         |
| 4.  | Fee for events and services   | Can ask a meeting to decide            | Most likely place for this decision                              | Can decide   | Can ask a meeting to decide         |
| 5.  | Electing or removing office holders   | Can ask a meeting to decide            | Most likely place for this decision                              | Can decide   | Can ask a meeting to decide         |
| 6.  | Determine Forum structure and guidelines  | Can ask a meeting to decide            | Can decide   | Can decide   | Can ask a meeting to decide         |
| 7.  | Determine Forum priorities  | Can ask a meeting to decide            | Can decide   | Can decide   | Can ask a meeting to decide         |
| 8.  | Appoint/remove a spokesperson of the Forum  | Can ask a meeting to decide            | Can decide   | Can decide   | Can ask a meeting to decide         |
| 9.  | Statements on behalf of the Forum to public or to specific people/bodies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approving the words that will be used</li> <li>• Identifying those key people/positions in which our voice must be heard</li> </ul> | Can ask a meeting to decide            | Can decide   | Can decide   | Can ask a meeting to decide         |
| 10. | Accept or alter minutes of meetings   | Can ask a meeting to decide            | Can decide   | Can decide   | Can ask a meeting to decide         |

## Attachment one

### Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle LGBTIQ Catholic Forum Membership Form

All members of the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle LGBTIQ Catholic Forum (Forum) seek to affirm and to build the dignity of each person and to support them in their development to be the person God calls them to be.

There is no fee in joining the Forum.

All members of the Forum agree to support the purpose and principles of the Forum (as expressed in the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle LGBTIQ Catholic Forum Guidelines).

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I agree with, and will support, the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle LGBTIQ Catholic Forum by:

- listening to, learning from and journeying with the LGBTIQ people who are members of the parishes and workers within the schools, welfare and other shared services within the Diocese of Maitland Newcastle;
- assisting Church members to better understand, include and minister to LGBTIQ people and their families;
- supporting LGBTIQ people, their families, friends, and brothers and sisters to grow in faith;
- providing pastoral support to LGBTIQ people; their families, friends/support network;
- including as many Forum members as possible in decision making;
- providing as much information about Forum issues as possible to other Forum members; and
- encouraging Forum members to contribute their time and skills in whatever way they can.

**Name:** .....

**Email address:** .....

**Phone number:** .....

**Signed:** ..... **Date:** .....

Your privacy matters:

- Your name, email address and phone number will be stored securely by the Forum Secretary.
- Your email address will be used in the blind copy email field to send you information about Forum issues and events.
- The Forum Secretary will only call your phone number if they are concerned that Forum emails are not getting to you or if they need to contact you urgently.
- Your name, email address and phone number will not be disclosed to anyone without your permission.

## Attachment two

### Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle LGBTIQ Catholic Forum Secretary position description

#### Purpose of this position

The LGBTIQ Catholic Forum (Forum) will appoint a Secretary to assist organise meetings and the healthy functioning of the Forum community.

The Forum makes decisions at its regular meetings. The Secretary will take issues to Forum meetings for decision. The Secretary is not a position of authority. The Secretary can only act or speak on behalf of the Forum with prior approval of a Forum meeting.

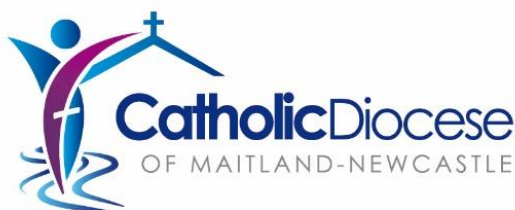
The purpose of the Secretary position is primarily to ensure that the Forum's administrative and practical tasks are completed.

The Forum needs all of its members to care for each other and contribute to the success of the Forum. The Secretary should not take roles away from others and others should not leave roles to the Secretary when they could complete them.

Secretary is a voluntary position.

The Secretary, like all other members of the Forum, agree to support the purpose and principles of the Forum.

| <b>Key Accountabilities</b>               |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Key Area</b>                           | <b>Key Tasks (what does it look like?)</b>   |
| <b><i>Email notice of meetings</i></b>    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• All Forum members receive an email containing a notice of a Forum meeting (where, when and issues for discussion)</li><li>• Forum member email addresses will be in the blind copy email field</li></ul>   |
| <b><i>Ensure meetings are Chaired</i></b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ask Forum members to Chair the meeting or to take notes for a record of the meeting.</li></ul>   |
| <b><i>Email record of meetings</i></b>    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Record of meetings will include: date, attendance, issues discussed, decisions made, actions agreed actions (who, what, by when)</li><li>• All Forum members receive an email containing a record of Forum meetings</li><li>• Forum member email addresses will be in the blind copy email field</li></ul>   |
| <b><i>Securely store information</i></b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Forum member names, email address and phone number will be stored securely (e.g., paper membership forums will be scanned and stored electronically with the paper copy destroyed, electronic records are in a password protected computer)</li><li>• The Secretary will only phone Forum members if s/he is concerned that Forum emails are not getting through or if s/he needs to contact the member urgently.</li><li>• Forum member names, email addresses and phone numbers will not be disclosed to anyone without the member's permission.</li></ul> |



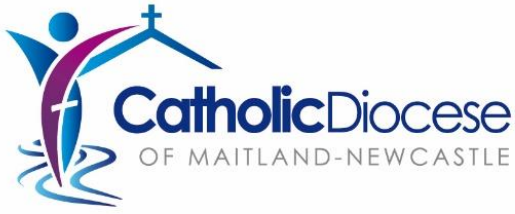
## Attachment three

### Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle LGBTIQ Catholic Forum LGBTIQ Email Address Coordinator position description

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>REPORTS TO</b>   |  |
| Director of Pastoral Ministries   |  |
| <b>ORGANISATIONAL SUMMARY</b>   |  |
| <p>The Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle serves the people of the Newcastle, Hunter and Manning regions which have a population of some 160,000 Catholics. Through its parishes, pastoral groups, and its agencies of Catholic Schools, CatholicCare, St Nicholas Early Education and other agencies the diocese provides faith, spiritual, pastoral, educational, social welfare, and community development. The Diocese employs approximately 3,500 staff across its parishes and agencies.</p>   |  |
| <b>VISION</b>   |  |
| To live the joy of the Gospel and share it with the world.  |  |
| <b>MISSION</b>  |  |
| <p>In 1992-93, the diocesan community resolved to embrace and promote Vatican II's understanding of the Church's mission contained in the following:</p> <p><i>The Church, because it is the People of God and the Body of Christ enlivened by his Spirit, is called to be a sign and instrument of communion with God and of unity among all people (LG1). The Church exists to promote the Kingdom of God on earth (LG5). This it does by proclaiming Christ – the Good News of God's love for all people – and by working in the world for justice, peace and reconciliation. We are called to live out the commandment of Jesus: 'Love one another as I have loved you' (Jn 15:12).</i></p> |  |
| <b>PRIMARY PURPOSE</b>  |  |
| <p>The purpose of this position is to manage the Diocesan email address used by the external group: the LGBTIQ Catholic Forum</p> <p>The Diocese has made an email address (<a href="mailto:LGBTIQ@mn.catholic.org.au">LGBTIQ@mn.catholic.org.au</a>) available to the LGBTIQ Catholic Forum as a gesture of solidarity and support.</p> <p>This position will ensure that emails sent from this address comply with the standard expected from all other users of Diocesan email accounts.</p> <p>This is a voluntary position.</p> <p>The incumbent commits to working within relevant policies of the Catholic Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle whilst carrying out this role.</p>              |  |
| <b>KEY ACCOUNTABILITIES</b>   |  |
| <b>KEY PERFORMANCE AREA</b>   | <b>KEY TASKS (WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?)</b>   |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Manage outgoing emails</b></li> </ol>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emails are clearly written and easily understood by recipients</li> </ul> |

|  |   |
|--|---|
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emails to persons/organisations will conform with the sample responses (Appendix 1) or will be approved by two other members of the LGBTIQ Catholic Forum</li> <li>• Non-routine emails to persons/organisations external to the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle, its agencies and parishes will first be discussed with the Forum's Priest-Support Person</li> </ul>                      |
| <p><b>2. Ensure the privacy of people who email</b></p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The names and details of email contents will be kept confidential within the LGBTIQ Catholic Forum unless the person has requested less disclosure.</li> <li>• All electronic and paper records are to be kept in a secure location</li> </ul>   |
| <p><b>3. Monitoring, reporting and improvement</b></p>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A record of all incoming and outgoing emails will be reported to each meeting of the LGBTIQ Catholic Forum</li> <li>• In December each year the LGBTIQ Email Address Manager will provide a report to the Director of Pastoral Ministries on the use of and issues with the email address</li> <li>• Contribute to reviews and new processes aimed at improving this service.</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>QUALIFICATIONS</b></p> <p><b>Essential</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Authorisation from the LGBTIQ Catholic Forum to hold this position</li> <li>• Completion of Volunteer Application form and acceptance as volunteer by the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle</li> <li>• Successful applicants must have successful clearances in regard to Working with Children and Criminal background checks</li> </ul> <p><b>Desirable</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrated personal commitment to Catholic faith</li> </ul> |   |
| <p><b>SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good written communication skills</li> <li>• Demonstrated ability in the use of Microsoft Office programs</li> <li>• Demonstrated interpersonal skills, negotiation skills and group presentation skill</li> <li>• Demonstrated ability to work with minimal supervision and coordinate multiple tasks</li> </ul>   |   |
| <p><b>KEY RELATIONSHIPS (EXAMPLES)</b></p>   |   |
| <p><b>INTERNAL</b></p>   | <p><b>EXTERNAL</b></p>  |

|   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| Director of Pastoral Ministries   | LGBTIQ Catholic Forum                   |   |
|   | Parishioners and Parish Ministers/staff |   |
|   | The Community                           |   |
| <p><b>SUCCESSION PLANNING</b></p> <p>The LGBTIQ Catholic Forum is to ensure succession planning for this role</p>   |   |   |
| <p><b>LEGISLATIVE AND RISK REQUIREMENTS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Australian Privacy Principles (APPLC's) – Commonwealth Privacy Act 1988</li> <li>• Safeguarding (Working with Children) Act 2012</li> </ul>  |   |   |
| <p><b>Occupants must:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Abide by the laws of the Commonwealth of Australia and NSW and the policies of the Catholic Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle.</li> <li>• Report, as soon as practicable to the Head of Human Resources, any criminal action taken against them, or civil action that may have an impact of the reputation of the Catholic Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle or may lead to a conflict of interest;</li> <li>• Take reasonable action to understand and familiarise himself/herself with the Catholic Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle's policies and procedures, including those relating to the expected Code of Conduct and confidentiality.</li> <li>• Not take advantage of their role at the Catholic Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle for personal gain;</li> <li>• Take responsibility for their own health, safety and wellbeing and that of other employees, clients, contractors and visitors in the Catholic Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle workplaces, understanding that all employees have a duty of care toward one another.</li> </ul> |   |   |
| <p><b>EXPECTED BEHAVIOUR</b></p> <p><b>Workers of the Diocese are expected to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• respect the dignity, rights and views of others</li> <li>• listen and seek to understand different points of view (this does not necessarily mean agreeing with the point of view)</li> <li>• act respectfully at all times, including respecting cultural, ethnic and religious differences</li> <li>• acknowledge the genuine contributions that others make</li> <li>• express constructive feedback considerately and in a moderate tone</li> <li>• not harass, bully or discriminate against colleagues, students, people we support or members of the community</li> <li>• be courteous, fair, sensitive and considerate to the needs of others</li> <li>• be honest and act with integrity at all times</li> <li>• actively assist in managing workplace conflict that personally affects them or workers under their supervision to create positive and constructive outcomes.</li> </ul>   |   |   |
| Signature of Incumbent:   | Date:                                   | Supervisor:                               |
| <b>Position Description Last Reviewed:</b> 22 Nov 2020  |   | <b>Next Review is due on:</b> 22 Nov 2021 |





**Appendix 1 Sample responses to incoming emails (14 Sept 2020 version)**

**PARENTS**

**Q. How do I/we know if my son/daughter is LGBTIQ?**

**A.** Explore reasons why the parent/s is/are asking this question. Is there something in the child's behaviour that leads the parent/s to ask this? What is the parent/s understanding of LGBTIQ? Has the child questioned his/her/their sexuality or gender identity?

**Q. My daughter/son/child has told me that she/he/they is/are LGBTIQ – what is the Church's teaching about being LGBTIQ? Will my daughter/son/child go to Hell because she/he/they is/are LGBTIQ? Am I to blame because my daughter/son/child is LGBTIQ? Will God punish me/my daughter/my son/my child because she/he/they are LGBTIQ? How should I respond to my daughter's/son's/child's disclosure to me that she/he/they is/are LGBTIQ? Is there anyone with whom I can discuss this disclosure so that I can better understand/accept my daughter's/son's/child's sexuality/gender identity or any confusion she/he/they may have in making this disclosure?**

**A.** These are complex moral and pastoral issues that are best discussed face-to-face. If you want, I can give you the contact details of a priest or pastoral Associate who can meet with you. Do you give me permission to ask LGBTIQ Catholic Forum's Priest Support person (Rev Paul O'Neill) for his suggestion of someone who could meet with you? If you would prefer I can ask him without disclosing your name. Please let me know whether weekdays, after hours or weekends suit you best and how far you can travel to meet someone.

(Then contact the LGBTIQ Catholic Forum's Priest Support person for the names and contact details of people who could meet with the person).

Suggest the parent/s contact PFLAG: [pflag.hunter@gmail.com](mailto:pflag.hunter@gmail.com)

**SINGLE PERSON**

**Q. I think I might be LGBTIQ because ..... What does the Church have to say about my being LGBTIQ? Can I be LGBTIQ and still be a Catholic? Does God love me any the less because I'm LGBTIQ? Will God punish me because I'm LGBTIQ? With whom can I discuss my being LGBTIQ and Catholic?**

**A.** For what the Church has to say about being LGBTIQ / LGBTIQ sexual activity / gender transitioning – referral as for answer above for a parent/parents.

For discussing coming to terms with being LGBTIQ and Catholic – as for immediately above or to a counselling service known to have a sensitivity / practical professional approach to this issue: e.g. ACON/ACON Hunter [\(02\) 4962 7700](tel:0249627700) ; [Lifeline 13 11 14](tel:131114) or [Kids Helpline 1800 551 800](tel:1800551800).

**MARRIED / PARTNERED PERSON IN A HETEROSEXUAL RELATIONSHIP**

**Q. I'm a straight person and married / in a relationship but think I might be LGBTIQ because ..... Who can I talk to about this? Should I tell my husband/wife/ partner about this?**

**A.** Suggest speaking to a qualified counsellor about this matter.  
E.g., Relationships Australia [1300 364 277](tel:1300364277) /counselling services mentioned above / private counsellor / private counselling service with expertise and sensitivity in the area of sexual identity/ gender identity matters.

Suggest speaking with a qualified counsellor before disclosure to husband/wife/ partner.

**CONCERNED CATHOLIC**

**Q. The Church has clear teachings about LGBTIQ people and what they do – does your group agree with these teachings?**

**A.** The LGBTIQ Catholic Forum acknowledges the teaching of the Church. Our group's role is to offer a pastoral approach to LGBTIQ people, their families and supporters.

**Q. Does the Bishop / Pastoral Care Office know who / what the LGBTIQ Catholic Forum is and what it is doing?**

**A.** The Bishop / Pastoral Care Office is aware of the LGBTIQ Catholic Forum and support the Forum and its pastoral activity. If you have concerns about this you should contact the Bishop / Pastoral Care Office to discuss your concerns.

**Appendix 2 Record of emails**

 **Incoming** emails

| Date | From | Subject line | Content | Attachment(s) |
|------|------|--------------|---------|---------------|
|      |      |              |         |               |
|      |      |              |         |               |
|      |      |              |         |               |

 **Outgoing** emails

| Date | To | Subject line | Content | Attachment(s) |
|------|----|--------------|---------|---------------|
|      |    |              |         |               |
|      |    |              |         |               |
|      |    |              |         |               |