

NSW & ACT Baptist Association

Taskforce to oversee discussion process regarding Baptist Values and Same Sex Marriage

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Framework for the discussion

1. Affirming the current definition of marriage as set out in our Constitution as: *“An institution created by God as the foundation for a lifelong faithful union of a man and a woman.”* There is no proposal to change this definition.
2. The motions tabled at the September 19 Assembly.

Process

1. The Taskforce will plan and oversee a series of forum discussions around the motions and the issues that relate to them. These may be in 3 main areas:
 - a. Pastoral/missional – What are our pastoral and missional responses to same sex oriented persons? What does it mean to welcome and love people if Baptists cannot affirm their lifestyle and sexual choices? How might churches best support and provide true community for those seeking to live celibate lives as single persons, regardless of their sexual orientation? What does all this look like when outworked in the community life of our churches?
 - b. Theological – the interaction between our shared commitment to common Beliefs and values and the Baptist tenet of freedom of conscience, and how these two convictions work together in Baptist life.
 - c. Practical – how should our movement respond to affiliated churches and accredited/recognised pastors who feel they cannot affirm our Values as set out in the Constitution, and specifically the value which contains our definition of marriage? What implications are appropriate?

The aims of these forums will be to provide opportunity for participants to engage with and discuss the issues above. It is not expected that the whole Taskforce will attend all the forums, though representative(s) should attend each forum. The Taskforce may choose to appoint persons to facilitate the forums from among their number or from outside the Taskforce. Assembly Council will seek to have a representative at as many of the forums as possible.

2. There will also be opportunity for individuals, churches and affiliated groups to provide feedback to the Taskforce.
3. The Taskforce will provide a report on the major issues raised at the forums to Assembly Council, to then be tabled at the May 2020 Annual Assembly.

The Taskforce...

1. will reflect diversity among its participants, within an overall framework of support for our Association's definition of marriage remaining as it currently is. Taskforce members will need to be able to engage constructively and positively in this environment.
2. may choose to recommend preliminary material for people to consider prior to participating in the forums.
3. will be provided secretarial and logistical assistance from volunteers and/or Association staff to enable it to complete its work.