

Gender and Sexual Diversity in Lutheran Learning Communities Working Group

Memo 1
17 May 2021

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The LESNW Regional Office is increasingly aware of the conversations learning communities are having with parents, students and staff about students who identify somewhere within the LGBTQAI+ spectrum, and the pastoral and practical implications of this. In turn, the Regional Office has been contacted several times seeking advice and direction.

As the issues involved are quite complex, the Regional Office decided to form a working group to gain a clearer understanding of the breadth of issues involved and in light of that, to seek to develop some information and guidance for learning communities. A letter was sent to all Principals and Directors seeking nominations for the working group. In turn the following 18 staff were selected:

Roger	Anderson	LESNW Regional Office
Maria	Chiarolli	Concordia College
Dean	Cummins	Good Shepherd Lutheran College, Howard Springs NT
Chris	England	Yirara College, NT
Dale	Gosden	Concordia College
Marni	Harding	Endeavour College
Dale	Hoffman	Cornerstone College
Brett	Humphries	Good Shepherd Lutheran School, Para Vista
Nicole	John	Faith Lutheran College - Faith Campus
Paul	Kaesler	Calvary Lutheran Primary School
Leila	Mattner	St Paul Lutheran School
Athalie	McArdle	Unity College
Kathy	Oliphant	St Martins College
John	Proeve	LESNW Regional Office
Stuart	Traeger	LESNW Regional Office
Tim	Vanderbom	Cornerstone College

The working group met for the first time on Tuesday 11 May with the main aim of determining its purpose and scope.

Being a large and diverse group we spent time listening to each other's stories, questions, and hoped for outcomes for the working group. We unpacked various understandings of a number of terms and acronyms often used in regards to sexual and gender identity to ensure the group has clarity and precision in its discussions. We then worked through the various expressions of LGBTQAI+ in order to gain an understanding of the various areas learning communities are looking for support in (e.g. same sex attraction, transgender, etc.)

The title, *Gender and Sexual Diversity in Lutheran Learning Communities Working Group* was chosen in the hope that it respectfully includes all the diverse expressions of gender and sexual identities without giving them titles. It also identifies it as a working group which has a task to complete within a certain time frame.

The working group realizes that gender and sexual diversity is expressed by students, staff and parents within our learning communities. The working group, however, decided to concentrate its efforts on student expression of gender and sexual diversity. It is hoped that much of this work will then in turn be able to speak into staff and parent expressions of gender and sexual diversity.

The purpose and scope is still being refined, but in essence the purpose of the working group is to provide support and guidance to LESNW learning communities in the areas of student gender and sexual diversity. Taking into account relevant LCA statements, pastoral and legal perspectives, along with student, staff and parent voices (particularly from the LGBTQAI+ community), the group hopes to provide assistance to learning communities with regard to:

- Pastoral and practical considerations
- Clarity on the relevant legal requirements
- Resources to educate staff, students, parents and community members in gender and sexual diversity
- Understandings related to acceptance, support, and celebration of gender and sexual diversity

The working group endeavors to provide the outcome of its work to the LESNW Board by the end of April 2022. In the meantime, it also intends to keep learning communities, principals and directors updated through regular memos such as this.

These are very complex and highly emotive issues as they relate to student identity. Individual views on gender and sexual diversity can be quite strong and divided. The working group began its first meeting by reflecting on how King Solomon asked God for a discerning (i.e. listening) heart so that he could govern wisely. Please pray that God will similarly grant the working group a discerning heart that we may listen attentively to the needs of students, staff and families, to the Word of God, to the laws of our state and nation, and in humility, propose a way forward for LESNW learning communities.

If you have any questions of the working group, or are aware of anything that could benefit the work of the working group, please contact me via email stuart.traeger@lesnw.edu or on 0437 421 558.

Regards,

Stuart Traeger (Spiritual & Cultural Leader, LESNW Regional Office),

On behalf of the Gender and Sexual Diversity in Lutheran Learning Communities Working Group