

What about the T, Q & I: Gender, Transgender, Queer Theory, Intersex, and the Gospel?

A GiST Paper - June 2018

Description

The issue of gender, and how the world understands what it means to be human, is a significant and present concern in public debate both here in Australia and abroad. Transgender rights are the new flashpoint in the ongoing shift away from Biblical norms and the created order; and are in the public conversation thanks to initiatives like the Safe Schools educational material and questions about such diverse issues as school uniforms and public toilets. As Christians we are called to respond to the world in love, not from fear, confident not only that Jesus is King, but that he is the real answer to the longing of every human heart.

“This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment: In this world we are like Jesus. There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love. We love because he first loved us.” — 1 John 4:17-19

This is an initial position paper from the GiST Committee responding to these social changes which is intended to form the basis for our engagement on these issues as a committee, consistent with the philosophy of ministry adopted by the 2014 General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Queensland. In sum:

Our two-fold purpose is to equip believers in PCQ congregations to:

- a) live faithfully for Jesus in a secular society and;
- b) engage in gospel-hearted apologetics that point to the great hope we have in Jesus.

Scope

Our scope is limited to the areas of ethics, public policy and cultural engagement that impact significant numbers of Queenslanders.

Approach

We believe the gospel of Jesus Christ should shape all areas of life, and therefore our approach is to provide engaging, accurate and winsome material that is informed by Evangelical, Reformed, Christ-centred theology and includes both implications for believers and principles of engagement with those not yet believing.

This paper builds on the theological framework established in earlier works of the committee, specifically its papers on *The Gospel in Sexuality* and *The Gospel in Humanity*. These papers were adopted by previous Assemblies and we have assumed their conclusions in this paper in order to present a suite of resources for helping Christians to think through these complex issues in a unified frame.

This paper includes:

- A summary of this theological framework and the paper's position.
- A summary of the situation we are responding to.
- A theological framework centred on the Gospel.
- A careful approach to separating out the issues facing Intersex, and Transgender individuals in our community and the Gender-Queer ideology underpinning some of the rapid social change, and Gospel-based responses to each issue.
- A series of deliverances based on this paper.

GIST is also submitting, as a supplementary document, a sample resource, developed from this paper, as a response to the *Safe Schools* material being taught in Queensland schools, for believers, and especially parents.

Position Summary

1. God created humanity as male and female. This is his good design for biological sex and gender.
2. The fall brings curse and frustration to our experience of humanity, including an apparent diversity in our experience of biological sex and gender, which means that Intersex and Transgender individuals are experiencing a particular manifestation of the effect of the fall on the image of God in us.
3. Individuals experiencing these conditions, like all of us, are still made in God's image and so should be accorded the same dignity and love as any other human.
4. This tension between God's created order, and the total depravity of humanity — which extends to our biology — means that issues surrounding how transgender and intersex people are loved and included in society as well as how we minister to them in the gospel is complicated, not simply a matter of asserting the binary nature of biological sex and gender.
5. Our rapidly changing secular society appears to be departing rapidly from traditional, and Biblical, norms of gender and sexuality to normalise a 'fallen' rather than 'created' pattern for humanity, biological sex, and gender.
6. These changes are often driven by members of the LGBTQIA community, and their advocates, according to different agendas, and in the pursuit of different ends.

7. There is a particular stream of the LGBTQIA community who have adopted a form of Marxism to pursue a 'Gender Queer' agenda intent on eradicating 'male' and 'female' as categories. This position is vigorously contested within the LGBTQIA community, especially by some transgender advocates. One recent manifestation of this idolatrous ideology is the Safe Schools program; which has good intentions in terms of mental health outcomes and safety for a marginalised and at risk section of the community, but is underpinned by this agenda. The church must find ways to support better mental health outcomes for those marginalised and at risk people groups, while repudiating this particular agenda.
8. Each subset of this diverse community has different, sometimes competing, desires and goals, but a shared interest in safety, being understood, and being accepted by society. Each subset of the broader LGBTQIA community is, as a result of being, or feeling, misunderstood and isolated, historically or at present, and as a result of a genuine struggle for identity, at greater risk than the wider community in various mental health categories.
9. All humans were made to bear God's image and to find our identity in relation to Him. As a result of the Fall, we all naturally seek this identity in created things (including biological sex, gender, and sexuality) rather than in God, as we see him in Jesus.
10. It is only in Jesus that we find forgiveness for our idolatry and rebellion, and are reconciled to God. Moreover, the restoration of our humanity in Jesus involves a new identity, and includes the longing for resurrected bodies and a world with no curse or frustration. This is where real hope is found for all people.
11. As those loved by God in Jesus, we seek to build communities in which people of all ages grow together in the gospel, and from which we reach out in love to the lost with the gospel. Our churches also form vital relational contexts which reinforce, enrich and model identity in Christ in contrast to the idolatrous identities of the world.
12. We must be careful, in speaking about Transgender and Intersex people, and issues in our community, not to conflate these conditions with the Marxist 'gender-queer' agenda, and so increase the marginalisation of these communities within our community. Doing so may increase the risk of mental health issues, and harm, for our vulnerable neighbours. The LGBTQIA allegiance is fragile, complex, and based on a desire to be heard, understood, and safe. We would do well to listen carefully to each community, and each individual, before adopting blanket and simplistic position statements that deny the complex realities for these communities. Moreover, we desire and do everything we can to see each individual come into a saving, liberating and transforming relationship with Jesus.

The Situation

Our rapidly changing society has left many people fearful, and worried that they might be alone. It has created many coalitions where people with shared interests come together for protection, or to advocate in areas of shared concern. Sometimes those in power are there because they've done the work of forming a shared platform or agenda so that a particular ideology now seems to

disproportionately shape the public. We form coalitions and lobby groups as Christians, but we are not alone in fearing rapid social change and fearing what those in power might do to us according to a particular agenda or ideology. But we are not alone in this.

Many social commentators have noticed the growing number of letters being added to the acronym LGBTQIA, and the experiences each represents, coming under the umbrella of what was once the LGBT movement. Christians have, for some time, considered how to respond to those in this movement whose identities are derived from their sexuality – Lesbian (L), Gay (G), and Bisexual (B) individuals, but are only now beginning to grapple well, and publish thoughts, on how to engage with the reality for Transgender (T) people. This more recent response has come, in part, because the reality of Transgender people has been made public through the lives of prominent or famous transgender people like Australian Defence Force speech-writer Group Captain Cate McGregor, US television personality Caitlin Jenner, and others like prominent movie producers the Wachowski Sisters (formerly known as the Wachowski Brothers). The letters have expanded more recently to include gender-queer (Q), intersex (I), and asexual (A – a person who does not experience sexual attraction).

It might, at times, feel like we as Christians are the ones who are living in fear, especially when we observe how fast society is moving from what we consider ‘normal’ and from God’s created order. We are increasingly a minority voice in our community, and will increasingly struggle to be heard and understood.

The world is also a confusing and scary place for those in minority groups, whose experiences of life are such that the vast majority of people do not understand. This is why these groups band together, so they too might be heard and understood. But this allegiance is fragile. Like most coalitions, these associations are occasionally fraught with inconsistencies and contradictions.

What these different groups share is a sense that:

- their experience of humanity (especially gender and sexuality), and so their identity falls outside social norms;
- that this creates fear, confusion, misunderstanding, danger and a lack of safety in society, as demonstrated by high rates of mental health issues and suicide in these communities; and
- without advocacy their experience would be ignored by a majority unable to truly empathise with them.

These inconsistencies and contradictions present themselves when, for example, some advocating for homosexual rights argue that sexuality is something you are born with, and essential; such that it cannot possibly be changed or questioned, while transgender advocates argue that the ‘sex’ you are born with should be able to be changed in order to accommodate your gender identity.

A particular stream of gender-queer theory, led in Australia by the Safe Schools Coalition’s Roz Ward (a transgender woman), seeks to abolish all categorisation based on gender and sexuality, such that all people are ‘queer,’ while Catherine McGregor (a transgender woman) says distinct genders – male and female – are fundamentally important to her, and are entirely the point of

being transgender, that an individual finds meaning and identity when their biological sex and their gender identity are aligned so that they are 'male' or 'female'.

The intersex community contains those whose gender is biologically indeterminate, or those who had a gender assigned to them at birth. Their experience is perhaps the furthest removed from others in the LGBTQIA community, and in some ways, they are the least likely to feel adequately represented by others in this 'broad church.'

The strength of the LGBTQIA movement is that it provides a safe place, and a place of listening and understanding for those who are used to being misunderstood because their experiences of sex, gender, and identity, fall outside the social norms. The LGBTQIA community is built on the fundamental desires to be loved, understood, heard, and safe – from misunderstanding, fear, and persecution.

The church, in taking up the example and love of Jesus, should aim to become a community that connects LGBTQIA people in our community with the transforming love of Jesus, and through our love helps point to Jesus as the answer for the LGBTQIA community's desire to be loved, understood, heard and safe. But the church must also faithfully proclaim that the effects of the Fall – sin and death – are *wired into the being of every person*, and that *Jesus is the answer to the deeper longing of our hearts* and our search for identity and joy.

This paper will suggest that:

- Real wholeness, and real identity, is not found in our gender or sexuality, but in rediscovering our created purpose and dignity, as God's image bearers, and that we make this discovery through Jesus.
- Our union with Christ, brought about by the work of the Holy Spirit, begins a process that will ultimately undo the natural frustration, sin, and brokenness, we experience in this world, and that this process culminates in our re-creation with new, resurrected, unblemished bodies in the New Creation.
- The present reality is that we live in a broken world, frustrated by God's curse, in broken and frustrated bodies that have been fundamentally affected by sin and death (Romans 8, 1 Corinthians 15).

Our hope for restoration is not surgery, or a coalition of people who will listen to us, but Jesus; however, our church communities should be places of safety that seek to understand and articulate this hope, this present reality, and the individual struggles and burdens of individuals in our community.

Our communities could be known as places where people feel safe to bring their burdens, fears, and sense of being misunderstood or unheard by the community, so that their deepest needs might be met in a loving community that points them, through the mess, to the one who will make all things new (Revelation 21-22).

Summary of relevant GIST framework on issues of humanity, sexuality, and gender

In the *Gospel in Humanity* and *Gospel in Sexuality* papers, adopted by previous PCQ Assemblies and published on the PCQ website, we established the following Biblical data points that will inform the approach in this paper, especially:

- God created human beings – male and female - to reflect His image
- Humanity’s task of reflecting the image of God was disastrously marred by the sinful decision to reject God, bringing death and judgement. Sin resides deep within the hearts of each person and affects the entire being – the will, understanding, emotions, speech, relationships, behaviour and body. This fundamental rebellion gives rise to an endless variety of sinful values, habits, orientations, acts, thoughts and words. Sin entangles and damages each person to the very depths of their being. Our alienation from our Creator renders us spiritually dead.
- God’s Son, the man Jesus Christ, perfectly reflected God and showed us what humanity is meant to be. Jesus died and rose on behalf of sinful people to rescue them from the penalty of sin, conform them to His own image, and bring eternal life.
- The greatest need of humanity is to hear and be transformed by the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and so be transformed into the image of Christ through the work of the Spirit, which culminates in our resurrected bodies in the New Creation. This is the only true answer to our longings, and the true solution to the effects of sin on our bodies and experience.

Biological Sex, Gender, and The Fall

The Bible clearly states that God made humanity as male and female, and we can assume that gender and anatomical sex were created to be clearly aligned so that there was no confusion. There is some created ideal version of ‘male’ and ‘female’, and a created relationship between the two where males and females work as necessary allies in God’s kingdom — being fruitful and multiplying, ruling under God, and representing God in our equality and difference; in our being and our relating.

Our biological sex is an important aspect of the created order; and of human identity as God created it to be experienced.

We believe that biological sex and gender were designed to reflect God’s nature, and so to harmoniously align; such that a different gender identity and biological sex is not part of God’s good design.

The Fall introduces sin and frustration into our approach to God’s design for humanity. This expresses itself in many ways. The effects of sin and God’s curse in Genesis 3 — the ‘frustration’ experienced by God’s world (Romans 8), extends to our biology — our flesh.

One obvious change to our bodies is that we now decay and die (Genesis 3, 1 Corinthians 15). Our very biology has been rewired and pushed away from the created ideal by sin; so that the work of transformation and re-creation wrought by God through the Spirit is a process of transforming our

hearts and minds now, while we anticipate a resurrected body that is not subject to death and decay (Genesis 6:5, Psalm 51:5, Romans 7-8, 1 Corinthians 15).

Our resurrected bodies, no longer frustrated by sin, disease, disorder, death and curse are things we wait for, while living as people whose hearts and minds — and identity — are being transformed as we have become the children of God again (Romans 8).

We all live in this tension between flesh and spirit. Until then, our biology is frustrated so that God's good design is no longer our experience. This is the position articulated by the Westminster Confession of Faith, chapter 6, 'Of the Fall of Man, of sin, and the punishment thereof':

*By this sin they fell from their original righteousness and communion, with God, and so became dead in sin, and wholly **defiled in all the parts and faculties of soul and body.***

This is universally true of all of us, but manifests itself differently in each of us.

What is 'I': Understanding Intersex

Definitions of Intersex

This framework accounts for the existence of the medical phenomenon of *intersex*. Different health professionals have adopted different definitions for intersexuality to describe variances in sexual anatomy, chromosomal abnormalities, or other conditions.

The Australian Human Rights Commission defines intersex as:

*"The term 'intersex' refers to people who are born with genetic, hormonal or physical sex characteristics that are not typically 'male' or 'female'."*¹

The Commonwealth Sex Discrimination Amendment (Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Intersex Status) Act 2013 added the following definition to federal anti-discrimination law:

*"intersex status means the status of having physical, hormonal or genetic features that are: (a) neither wholly female nor wholly male; or (b) a combination of female and male; or (c) neither female nor male."*²

The prevalence of intersexuality in our community

Using the broadest definition possible, one often cited figure puts the prevalence of intersexuality at 1.7% of births, while a more technical definition based on occasions "where chromosomal sex is inconsistent with phenotypic sex, or in which the phenotype is not classifiable as either male or female" suggests a prevalence of 0.018%.³

¹ Australian Human Rights Commission, "Resilient Individuals: Sexual Orientation Gender Identity & Intersex Rights 2015", cited in Organisation Intersex International Australia Ltd, 'What Is Intersex,' <http://oii.org.au/18106/what-is-intersex/>

² The Commonwealth Sex Discrimination Amendment (Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Intersex Status) Act 2013, cited in OII Australia, What Is Intersex, <http://oii.org.au/18106/what-is-intersex/>

³ How common is intersex? A response to Anne Fausto-Sterling. J Sex Res, *The Journal of Sex Research* 39(3):174-8 · September 2002

Whatever the prevalence, or definition, what is clear from the medical profession is that gender does not always occur, biologically, as a clear binary. In many of these cases a gender is assigned at birth by a multidisciplinary team of doctors making a judgment call, in consultation with parents, on what the most appropriate gender is to assign to a particular individual. Some voices recommend delaying such decisions until the child is able to voice their own sense of gender identity.

The prevalence of gender identity questions amongst those individuals who have presented as intersex and had a gender assigned to them at birth is significantly higher than in the general population, to the extent that medical professionals do not diagnose this as “Gender Dysphoria” but as a symptom of intersexuality.⁴

The prevalence of *intersexuality*, despite being quite low, does support the theological conclusion that our biology is frustrated such that God’s good design is no longer the universal human experience.

What is ‘T’: Understanding Transgender

The existence of *intersexuality* is not a threat to a Christian belief in the created order, and God’s design, and while *intersexuality* is a different condition to conditions under the *transgender* umbrella,⁵ the existence of ‘I’ does at least position the issue in such a way that we might acknowledge that questions of biological sex and gender identity are complex matters where frustration, curse, and sin, are at play when it comes to ‘T’. That it is not simply a question of individual sin or a rejection of God’s good design.

Intersex individuals are certainly “born this way”, born, like all of us, into a frustrated world that longs for its renewal, the question is, is this also true for Transgender individuals experiencing Gender Dysphoria?

Understanding gender: the difference between gender and sex

Gender and biological sex are two different concepts. Our biological sex is determined by our chromosomes and physical anatomy; our gender is an identity that overlays our experience in the world as individuals with this biology. Broadly speaking it incorporates our understanding of maleness and femaleness, or masculinity and femininity.

We believe biological sex and gender were created to work in harmony in an individuals embodied experience of the world, but that this harmony is just as open to the effects of total depravity — of curse, frustration, and sin — as any other aspect of our humanity.

⁴ Heino F. L. Meyer-Bahlburg, *Intersexuality and the diagnosis of gender identity disorder*, *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, February 1994, Volume 23, Issue 1, pp 21-40, .

“Data on prevalence, age of onset or presentation, sex ratio, and associated or predictive factors also suggest marked differences between intersex patients with gender identity problems and nonintersex patients with GID. Patients with intersexuality or similar medical conditions should be excluded from the GID diagnosis.”

⁵ For a list of differences at law, in medicine and psychology, and socially, see: <https://oii.org.au/18194/differences-intersex-trans/>

Where we would assume, typically, that our biological sex is essential to who we are — something natural that we are born with (apart from those born *intersex*), our society has, for some time, assumed gender is a ‘constructed’ aspect of our humanity; a thing that individuals and cultures can shape for themselves, rather than being inherent to our humanity.

Different cultures do construct different norms for ‘masculinity’ and ‘femininity’; which suggests that gender, in terms of identity, is constructed.

This is not to suggest that God did not create ideal forms of male and female; we see these ideals on display in creation and in the ongoing equality and difference between male and female described in the life of the church.

It is that gender identities can be meaningfully constructed, apart from God’s design, that makes the *queer* agenda to abolish all gender difference, such a powerful, damaging, and ungodly force in our world, but it is that gender difference is a fundamental human good that puts the transgender community at odds with the Queer community. As transgender advocate Catherine McGregor puts it:

“Most of us transition because gender is important to us and we feel torn between our anatomy and our psychology. Being told to live genderless would have killed me just as certainly as saying the Rosary to feel happily male.”⁶

Born this way? Is transgender always a choice?

Where *intersex* is a physical blurring of the created ordering of male and female, *transgender* is a psychological blurring of this order. Some in the Queer theory camp would have us believe that anybody can choose to be queer — to not have a binary gender; but as we see above, this is a different narrative to the desire to have one’s biological sex line up with one’s gender identity.

Scientists have begun conducting examinations of the brains of individuals experiencing gender dysphoria, people who might join the *transgender* community and identify as such, or transition to identifying as a gender other than their biological sex at birth.

These studies of the brains of particular individuals suggest that those experiencing gender dysphoria may do so because of fundamental differences in the male and female brain; they may, in some cases, actually have a ‘female’ brain in an anatomically male body.⁷ Again, this is coherent with the theological position outlined above, that sin has fundamentally altered our biology away from the created order, and that our earthly bodies are now subject to curse and frustration.

While the evidence on this point is still being collected, we should not rule out the idea, and the early evidence, that transgender individuals are born with an identity that falls outside God’s created design for humanity, because this is the experience of all humans.

⁶ <http://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/rendezview/i-am-transgender-and-i-oppose-safe-schools/news-story/7e194d1cc3037b6966b9fdab59871bf9>

⁷ <http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/is-there-something-unique-about-the-transgender-brain/>

How Christians should engage with Intersex or Transgender individuals and communities

Listen

The experience of being human is different, and complex, for every individual and community. We should not presume to understand life as a *transgender* or *intersex* individual, or the shared life of people in these communities. We have certainty about God's design for biological sex and gender; but the experience of these facets of our identity, and other facets like sexual orientation, after the fall, will be as diverse as the affect of God's curse and the frustration of creation is on our biology, our desires, and our imaginations.

We must listen carefully so that we might distinguish those who are genuinely experiencing the brokenness of our biology from those who are wholeheartedly and intentionally adopting a view of humanity that seeks to eradicate God's good design.

This is not to suggest *transgender* or *intersex* individuals will not sin in the area of their gender identity, or in the implications of a particular identity in their lives, it is simply to affirm the distinction between volitional and non-volitional sin.

Remember the Gospel — which pushes us towards the new creation

Transgender and Intersex individuals, like all of us, are a complex mix of the Image of God, our default human rejection of that image, and the frustration of that Image experienced as a result of God's judgment. They, like all of us, are invited to find their primary identity *in Christ*, and like all of us, to anticipate the re-creation of our cursed, frustrated, and dying bodies at the resurrection, when Jesus makes all things new.

The hope we offer our Transgender and Intersex neighbours is the hope we offer all people, an identity beyond our sexual orientation and gender — and an identity beyond our dying and frustrated bodies. We offer the chance to be clothed with Christ, and re-experience our broken humanity, however it manifests itself, with the hope of re-creation and renewal.

“So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.” — Galatians 3:26-29

Our transgender and intersex neighbours, if they do not have the Spirit, are living testimonies to the reality that God's good design has been frustrated to the extent that our minds — our desires and thoughts — and bodies — won't always align. Where God made male and female, in the beginning, and his goodness was (and still is) evident in the relationship between maleness and femaleness, but this design for our humanity has been shattered by sin (our walking away from God's design) and God's curse (his punishment — giving us over to sinful minds, Romans 1:20-32).

The consequence of human sin is curse, we are cursed to live by dusty flesh, not by God's life-giving Spirit, and the consequence of this curse is frustration of God's design and death.

This is true for all people, and it grieves us, as Christians, to see people living apart from God's good design, and to experience the world as cursed and frustration for ourselves and see this

curse and frustration causing harm to others. Like the earth itself we groan, longing for all things to be made new.

Our transgender and intersex brothers and sisters, should they put their faith in Christ, are living testimonies to the hope that we have that all things will be made new, that one day our bodies will be resurrected and restored to a new, heavenly reality.

We should not expect biological frustration to be dealt with by the conversion of hearts and minds — that restoration comes fully and finally in the new creation where we are made new, and the curse and its affects are obliterated.

Remember the risks

The realities for Transgender and Intersex individuals within, or outside, the church is that they often feel isolated, misunderstood, broken, and as a result are vulnerable and at risk. The prevalence of mental health issues within the intersex community are not well documented, but studies suggest trans people are:

- About **six** times more likely to be seriously depressed
- More than **eight** times more likely to attempt suicide
- More than **three** times more likely to abuse illegal drugs.⁸

It is important that in speaking to, or about, these communities we do not *unnecessarily* pile on the pain, but instead that we offer a path to true satisfaction and identity. We have the opportunity to point to an answer to the frustration of our biology and our experience of life in this world.

Remember where real hope and certainty is found

Speaking into this world, as the Church, is incredibly complicated and we would recommend our public statements in this area should be produced with the aid of Christian medical professionals and psychologists. Questioning the moral status of surgical intervention (or making blanket statements that rule this out) denies the complicated reality of many *intersex* individuals when it is precisely an earlier surgical intervention that has produced issues at a later date.

The certainty we are able to offer, as the church, is the certainty of the new creation. Respected Christian sexologist, Dr Patricia Weerakoon, and her son, Presbyterian minister Kamal Weerakoon spoke on Gender Identity and Sexuality in a lecture at Sydney's New College. These words are worth considering as we respond to complex issues of biological sex and gender in a fallen world:

“The hope of restoration has come through Christ, giving an opportunity to overcome dissonance with a renewed identity. Gender is not all you are but it's right to feel you want a clear one. ... When Christ returns each person will be fully gender restored and the complementarity of Trinity and

⁸ United States Center for Disease Control (2014)

Christ and the church will be reflected in God's sons and daughters. Transgender people may not experience rest until then."⁹

Sexuality, Gender, and Idolatry: Queer theory as the deliberate attempt to eradicate God's design

While Transgender and Intersex communities are grappling with the frustration of our biology, and with our sinful inclination to adopt an identity apart from God, there is another 'gender' identity to consider; those who adopt the 'Queer' label.

This label is typically adopted by those in the *transgender* and *intersex* communities who are seeking to live without a binary gender identity. Sometimes the 'Queer' label simply acknowledges the complexity of biological sex and gender for particular individuals, but it represents a deliberate decision, by these individuals, to adopt this complexity as an identity; rather than seek the clarity of an identity built on a binary gender (male or female), or sexual orientation (heterosexual or homosexual).

This, at some level, is a deliberate decision to embrace a broken reality, it represents an inability, or failure, to see God's good design — a volitional, or non-volitional, suppression of truths about God (Romans 1:18-20).

The distinction between 'Queer' Identity and the Queer agenda

There are some within this Queer community with more radical aims, who are much more intentional in their ambition not just to embrace brokenness but entrench it as the desirable norm for all people. These aims are more troubling for Christians, and have damaging implications not just for Biblical and traditional views of gender and sexuality, but for the community at large.

Queer theorists seek eradication of gender and sexual orientation binaries for all people. This, at times, is paired with a Marxist political ideology. This is especially the case for Roz Ward, a transgender academic who is one of the architects of the Safe Schools material.

Ward describes her political and queer agenda in a speech given to the 2015 Marxism Conference as implementing Marxist social change by doing away with the binary gender and sexual orientations advocated by the 'ruling class':

"... the ruling class has benefited, and continues to benefit, from oppressing our bodies, our relationships, sexuality and gender identities alongside sexism, homophobia and transphobia.

Both serve to break the spirits of ordinary people, to consume our thoughts, to make us accept the status quo and for us to keep living or aspiring to live, or feel like we should live, in small social units and families where we must reproduce and take responsibility for those people in those units...

⁹ Dr P and K Weerakoon, "Gender Identity and Sexuality" lecture at New College at the University of New South Wales - <http://www.iscast.org/node/968>

Marxism offers both the hope and the strategy needed to create a world where human sexuality, gender and how we relate to our bodies can blossom in extraordinarily new and amazing ways that we can only try to imagine today, because Marxism has a theory of social change.”¹⁰

While the transgender and intersex experiences outlined above revolve around non-volitional sin and the cursed frustration of the creation, this Queer theory is a deliberate and idolatrous attempt to eradicate God’s good design for humanity (though Ward lays the blame for this design on the ‘ruling class’). This ideology is the product of minds given over by God to no longer being able to identify the goodness of the created world as God made it (Romans 1:18-32).

As Christians we must affirm God’s good design, and the restoration of it through Jesus, as the answer to the frustration of our experiences of biological sex and gender in this world. Queer theorists identify the same problem that we do, but offer a solution that is the polar opposite of the hope found in the Gospel; restoration of the clarity of gender identity and biological sex that has been obscured and lost for some as a result of the Fall.

This clarity — the clarity of binary gender categories where biology and identity align — is also precisely what members of the transgender and intersex communities often express a deep longing for... for example, Catherine McGregor, in describing her decision to oppose the Safe Schools program said:

“None of this gave me any joy. I risk hurting the feelings of some wonderful parents with wonderful trans kids. But I am more than my gender and that portion of the Left with which Ward is aligned sickens me nearly as much as the ratbags of Reclaim Australia.

Moreover, Safe Schools teaches a derivative of Queer Theory, which I believe leads trans people into a blind alley.”¹¹

Real hope does not lie in the eradication of gender difference or of binary sexual orientations, but in the restoration and recreation of our humanity so that we experience gender difference as God designed it.

¹⁰ Roz Ward, Safer Schools or a Radical Marxist Sexual revolution?, Online Opinion, <http://www.onlineopinion.com.au/view.asp?article=18033&page=0>

¹¹ <http://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/rendezview/i-am-transgender-and-i-oppose-safe-schools/news-story/7e194d1cc3037b6966b9fdab59871bf9>

Deliverances:

1. Adopt the GIST paper on gender, transgender, intersex, and queer theory as the position for GIST to take forward in preparing resources and responses for the PCQ.
2. Note that the paper contains a framework for responding to emerging social issues in a manner consistent with the GIST philosophy of ministry as adopted by the 2014 PCQ Assembly.
3. Note, and endorse the content of, the supplementary paper prepared by GIST, regarding the Safe Schools Coalition.
4. Request the GIST Committee to adapt this Safe Schools Paper, so that it can be presented in a form ideal for circulation to all sessions of the Presbyterian Church of Queensland, and to produce other suitable resources as it deems necessary, in relation to gender, transgender, intersex, queer theory, and safe schools for circulation to sessions.
5. Request GIST to continue to act according to its philosophy of ministry, approved by the 2014 Presbyterian Church of Queensland Assembly, to equip believers in our congregations to live faithfully in our rapidly changing secular society, and to respond with the Gospel, via the distribution of appropriate papers and resources to churches within the PCQ.
6. Request the moderator to make known the PCQ's position on any suitable occasion at his discretion.