

Community Statement From The LGBTQ+ Groups Of Singapore

Wednesday 1 June 2022, by [Collective / Multiple signers](#) (Date first published: 28 February 2022).

We, as organisations advocating for LGBTQ+ equality in Singapore, are disappointed with the Court of Appeal’s landmark ruling on Section 377A, which comes as a setback for all who were hoping for a resounding conclusion to this decades-long fight for equality. Despite recognising the current situation as deeply unsatisfactory for the LGBTQ+ community, the Court of Appeal has still decided to retain the law, albeit with legal assurances on its unenforceability.

We acknowledge the statements of support made by the judges in their ruling. They made assurances that homosexual men have a place in our society and can live freely, “without harassment or interference”.¹ They also agreed with one of our biggest contentions with the government’s promise of non-enforcement: that it is so uncertain and precarious that homosexual men cannot have any reasonable certainty about its application.² It is in response to this that the Court of Appeal has taken the government’s promise and imbued it with legal character, ruling that the entirety of Section 377A would be unenforceable in matters of prosecution.

While this is a small step in the right direction, this simply does not go far enough to provide real protection to the LGBTQ+ community, who continue to be impacted by the cascading effects of Section 377A. In fact, the judges themselves acknowledged that even with the assurance of unenforceability, homosexual men will still be left open to police investigations as if a crime had been committed.³ The retention of Section 377A means that LGBTQ+ Singaporeans continue to be harmed in fundamental ways: in health, housing, education, employment, and representation. It is an impediment to LGBTQ-inclusive policies. It is a barrier to LGBTQ+ people who are seeking help. It denies LGBTQ+ students a safe and conducive learning environment. It justifies censorship. It perpetuates discrimination and violence in our society, and obstructs justice for victims of crime. It impacts families and livelihoods. The Court’s reluctance to address these issues head-on has resulted in a missed opportunity for true progress to be made.

We also take issue with the court’s assertion that Section 377A does not stifle advocacy. LGBTQ+ organisations in Singapore have historically struggled precisely because of the existence of Section 377A and its cascading effects. We know first-hand how the meaningful work we do is stymied from a lack of access to critical funding and restrictions on our legal status, all because we are perceived as existing for an illegal cause or an illegitimate purpose.

The LGBTQ+ groups of Singapore stand ready for discourse, as we have always been. Minister K Shanmugam and Minister Lawrence Wong have both reiterated that the law protects the LGBTQ+ community from threats and violence, and “the Government will not let any group feel unheard, excluded or ostracised.” If the Government is committed to protecting the community, it must engage community groups and take decisive action towards a more equal and just society.

Despite today’s disappointing outcome, the whole community owes a debt of gratitude to Mr Bryan

Choong, Mr Johnson Ong and Dr Roy Tan and their legal teams. They have made history, along with Mr Tan Eng Hong, Mr Gary Lim, Mr Kenneth Chee and their respective legal teams.

Finally, we know from past experience how the weight of this ruling may reinforce prejudices and embolden discrimination, and are gravely concerned that will amplify existing mental health crises within our community. Emotional support is available for anyone who needs it during this difficult time. We have provided a list of them below:

Oogachaga

Oogachaga provides the LGBTQ+ community in Singapore safe and confidential services in the form of WhatsApp, email and professional counselling.

☎: 8592 0609, <https://wa.me/6585920609>

(Only messages, not Voice or Video Calls)

☎: 7pm to 10pm on 28 Feb, Monday to 3 Mar, Thursday

2pm to 5pm on 3 Mar, Saturday

☎: care oogchaga.com (daily)

Samaritans of Singapore (SOS)

SOS provides an anonymous, confidential and safe space for anyone in a crisis.

☎: 1767

☎: pat sos.org.sg

☎: Care Text via ChatBox function

☎: 24 hours, 7 days a week

Institute of Mental Health (IMH) Helpline

☎: 6389 2222

☎: 24 hours

For non-crisis LGBTQ community support resources, please refer to our social media.

This Community Statement is prepared by Ready4Repeal, and is co-signed by the following organisations:

Aces Going Places

AfA Singapore

Free Community Church

Gayhealth.sg

The Heartweavers

Inter-uni LGBT

Kaleidoscope

My Queer Story

One Queer Cher

Oogachaga

Pink Dot SG

Project X

Prout

Quasa

Sayoni

The Healing Circle

Singapore LGBT Law

SG Rainbow

SG Boys

Young Out Here

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