

Tom Morley

JP, BMedSc

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To whom it may concern,

My name is Tom Morley and the following is my submission to the Senate Inquiry regarding the Marriage Equality Amendment Bill 2010. Both my submission and my details may be made public.

I feel that firstly, I must make it clear that I identify as a homosexual man, however I do not believe in the institution of marriage. I have been involved in the movement for marriage equality for many years, as well as numerous other movements aimed at securing equal rights and opportunities for all both in Australia and globally.

For me, the institution of marriage is one that I personally do not wish to be involved in. What this means for me is that I have always been involved in a movement for *marriage equality*, not a movement for *same-sex marriage*. My only hope for the movement is a humble one - to gain equal access to marriage for any person who wishes to pursue it; to ensure equal access and equality.

Throughout the movement for marriage equality, I have chosen not to involve myself in discussions involving the religious nature of marriage. Australia is a country that many different people call home; people from many countries, people from many religions, people of many different belief systems. I simply cannot imagine how the government of this country, or any other country, can refuse to honour this multitude of beliefs. The Australian government aims to show separation of church and state, as I believe it should, and as such, any religious belief should not play a role in governmental decisions beyond the extent to which they influence public opinion.

When California, USA recently found the infamous *Proposition 8* constitutionally invalid, the media attention was significant. Despite many of the objectively offensive comments from those who oppose marriage equality, there was one phrase used throughout the legal proceedings that struck a chord with me (and *many* others).

"Indeed the evidence shows Proposition 8 does nothing more than enshrine in the California constitution the notion that opposite sex couples are superior to same sex couples." - Judge Vaughn Walker

This captures the essence of marriage inequality; the creation of a second class of citizens who are undisputedly discriminated against. This one sentence reassured me as to why I am involved in ensuring marriage equality.

As a medical student only 9 months away from becoming a practicing doctor, I am constantly in awe at the volume of unjust suffering I observe in marginalised communities both within Australia and overseas. What I find most striking is the volume of suffering occurring in Australia; in a country that prides itself on recognising

and protecting social and civil liberties, values and welfare. In 2012, we have the privilege, the obligation and the means to reduce suffering and inequality to extents never before possible in history. We are collectively lucky enough to live in a country that is open to positive change towards an objective good. As a result, the changes noted in the Marriage Equality Amendment Bill 2010 give us the perfect opportunity to join Belgium, Canada, the Netherlands, Norway, South Africa, Spain, Sweden and Argentina in recognising the importance of equal rights for all citizens.

I have for many years been very proud of Australia, but as years go by, it seems that our progressive and inclusive values are falling behind. Globally, many other governments are drastically reforming policy to include and defend the rights of their citizens and improve and protect overall quality of life. The trend in Australia seems to be that of becoming more conservative and less demanding of social justice. As a nation, we have evidently come so far in such a short period of time, but we have yet to move so much farther to maintain our position in the world as a progressive, truly lucky country. We must start by recognising and enforcing equality for every citizen of Australia. Same-sex marriage is but one of the rights that must be granted to all; to each and every Australian regardless of sex and gender.

Democracy requires governments to respond to the requests of the people. Only great governments take an opportunity like the one we have in front of us to lead a population through great change.

Regards,

Tom Morley