



एकं सत् विप्राः बहुधा वदन्ति
The Truth is One the wise
describe it variously



धर्मो रक्षति रक्षितः

Australian Council of Hindu Clergy

<http://www.australiancouncilofhinduclergy.com/>

President: Pt. Narendra Dave Secretary: Pt. Ramachandra Athreiya
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8th January 20176

Committee Secretary
Select Committee on the Exposure Draft of the Marriage Amendment (Same-Sex Marriage) Bill
Department of the Senate
PO Box 6100
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Sir or Madam:

I am writing on behalf of the Australian Council of Hindu Clergy to provide our input on the **Exposure Draft Same-Sex Marriage Bill**.

We, the Hindu Clergy believe that all people regardless of race, religion, colour, gender or sexual orientation have the right to be treated equally under the law and that includes the marriage law.

We recognise that this Draft Bill is about civil marriage law and not about the religious sacrament of marriage as currently performed by us, and that it will have no impact whatsoever on our ability to practise our religion or conduct our sacraments of marriage.

Adequate protections already exist under law to protect religious freedom and with that we are satisfied. Religious celebrants are already allowed to discriminate whom they choose to marry on the basis of their own religious doctrine or guiding principles. Civil celebrants are also not compelled by law to officiate at the marriage of everyone that approaches them, and all service providers are entitled to enter into contracts with whomsoever they please for whatsoever reasons. Therefore we propose that two exemptions be removed from the Bill as being unnecessary:—

(a) The allowance for both ministers of religion and civil celebrants to discriminate on the basis of 'conscientious belief',

(b) That religious bodies and organisations be permitted to refuse to provide facilities, goods or services to LGBTI people for their weddings.

We again reiterate that affirm our firm belief that all relationships, regardless of gender-identity or transsexual status should be recognised and treated equally under the civil law in accordance with social justice, human dignity and community integrity. We support the Draft Bill's change in the civil, legal definition of marriage from "man and woman" to "2 people", which is inclusive of all citizens and their relationships.

We consequently also support the Draft Bill's proposed recognition of same-sex marriages conducted and authorized in foreign countries and afford them the same value as heterosexual marriages so conducted and authorised.

Yours faithfully

Pandit Ramachandra Athreiya
Secretary Australian Council of Hindu Clergy.