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Senate Legal and Constitutional Committee Inquiry into allowing same sex couples to marry

I am an Australian, loving son, brother and uncle. I am a good law abiding, hard working citizen of Australia and I also happen to be gay. As you know, being gay is not a personal choice, it is not something that I knowingly elected, but it is who I am and have always been ever since I was born.

I am writing to you, because it is so very important to me that my same-sex partner and I be allowed the opportunity to marry when the time is right for us. I am a believer of equality, that all men and women are equal in the eyes of the laws of our land. Discrimination against gays and lesbians remains in our Australian community. As we know, discrimination leads to problems within our broader community, broken families, and in some cases to the loss of life through suicides from the pressures that discrimination brings. I believe the denial of marriage to same-sex attracted Australians is a continuation of this discrimination, and in some sense says that the discrimination of gay and lesbians (normal, everyday decent persons) is ok, and that there is something wrong about being gay or lesbian.

My personal story is one that is repeated in many households across the nation. I was brought up in a loving household. I have three great brothers, and I have been to the weddings of the two of them that have married. I just want that opportunity to share my expression of commitment and marriage to my partner, just as my brothers have had the opportunity to express theirs.

The main opponents to marriage claim that marriage is the building blocks of our community and that the purpose of marriage is to raise children. Well, I agree and disagree with that. Marriage is about love and commitment to another person. A legal recognition between those two persons. Is it only about raising children? Well, I don't think so.

Why?

In my family, one of my brothers married his wife, even though they did not have the intention of having children, and still don't have children, many years later.

My grandfather re-married at the age of 80 to a women of the same age. Obviously they had no intention of having children at their age, but he wanted, and was allowed, to marry the person he loved.

My mum and dad separated when I was five, and my mother (of whom I am so proud) brought us 4 boys up like any other caring family. I never lacked anything. So a family is not just about marriage. My mother brought us up perfectly well as a single mother, possibly she bought us up a lot better than some families where the mother and father are both present.

That is the reason I write to this inquiry. It is obvious to me, that if marriage was only about raising families, like many opponents to same-sex marriage have put forward, then neither my brother nor my grandfather should have been permitted to marry, and I guess that me and my brothers would have been taken away from my mother because she had separated from my dad. Such suggestions are certainly not even discussed in today's society.

Marriage is a basic human fundamental right. When divorce and civil weddings were permitted, Marriage stopped being the property of the church and became a party to the whole community, religious and non religious.

I am not asking for churches to be forced against their will to perform church marriages for same-sex couples, but I am asking for the extension of civil marriage to someone like myself, a normal, every-day Australian in a loving same-sex relation.

Coming out as a gay man, was perhaps the hardest thing to do in my life. To have held a secret for many years about my sexual orientation for so long, until I was 24, was in some respects crucifying. It may sound harsh, but the continuation of discrimination in marriage is nothing but pure DISCRIMINATION. It perpetuates in our community that there is something wrong with being gay, which there isn't.

The majority of Australians are in favour of same-sex marriage. Many other countries have changed their laws to permit same-sex marriage. The time has come for change. I urge that this commission finds in favour of same-sex marriage and recommends to the Australian Parliament a change to the Marriage Act.

As in those powerful words of a great human rights activist...

"I (too) have a dream today", that one day, all men and women will be treated equals in Australia before the law.

I would sincerely like to thank you for your time in considering my submission.