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26th March 2012

Senate Legal & Constitutional Committee
PO Box 6100 Parliament House Canberra ACT 2600



RE - MARRIAGE EQUALITY BILL 2010

I write to express my concern about the dangers of this Bill. While equality is a noble-sounding word, I would argue that our present law does not discriminate unjustly when it requires one man and one woman for marriage – it simply recognises and protects the distinctive nature of marriage. Discrimination is not an evil word – it can imply wisdom or discernment, both qualities we value in our parliamentarians.

My key concern about same-sex marriage is that it will lead to same-sex parenting, and in over thirty years of experience as a paediatrician I have read a large body of reliable scientific evidence indicating that children do best in all parameters when raised by their own mother and father. Professor Patrick Parkinson AM summarises – “if there is one major demographic change in western societies that can be linked to a large range of adverse consequences for many children, it is the growth in the number of children who experience life in a family other than living with their two biological parents, at some point before the age of 15.” I see these adverse consequences in my work with children every day – for the details please see my attached submission to the 2010 SA inquiry.

Looking back through recorded history, every society that has flourished has worked around this complementary relationship of male-female marriage. With respect, I strongly urge that you recognise the benefits to our Australian children of making no change to the existing definition of marriage in our current law.

Yours sincerely,

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12th July 2010

The Secretary
Social Development Committee
Parliament House
North Terrace Adelaide 5000

Dear Secretary,

RE - INQUIRY INTO SAME-SEX PARENTING

Thank you for the invitation to make a submission on whether same-sex parenting should be facilitated in South Australia. I note that part of your investigation will centre on whether homosexual couples should be allowed to have children created for them through assisted reproductive technology and surrogacy, or be allowed to adopt or foster children.

While superficially this may appear to be a politically correct example of equal opportunity, I must advise you that there is considerable evidence that same-sex parenting is not in the best interests of the child.

Simply stated, to grow and develop normally children need to see how men and women interact in a family situation. No matter how well intentioned, a same-sex union cannot provide that structure. I am aware that members of the homosexual lobby speak of their "right" to have a child. Today "rights" talk is very prevalent, and few of us seem to remember that our rights have always been balanced by our responsibilities. The wish to have a child must be balanced by the rights of the child. As a paediatrician I believe firmly that our children must be given priority, and not be used as a bargaining tool by same-sex activists seeking to advance their political cause.

My view on this issue is shaped by over thirty years experience as a specialist doctor caring for children. Throughout this time I have observed that children develop best, both physically and emotionally, when they are reared in a stable heterosexual two-parent family. Without criticising single parents or making judgements about people's situations or experiences, when families fracture we see large increases in health problems, emotional imbalances, learning disorders, defiant behaviours, drug use, sexual promiscuity, and criminality.

When my paediatric colleague Professor Fiona Stanley was Australian of the Year in 2003 she spoke of the crisis proportions of children in our society damaged by family dysfunction, and of the urgent need for all of us to examine closely whether our policies and legislation are supportive of families.

I will attach a copy of the 2009 statement on Homosexual Parenting from the (national) American College of Pediatricians. This concludes – “In summary, tradition and science agree that biological ties and dual gender parenting are protective for children. The family environment in which children are reared plays a critical role in forming a secure gender identity, positive emotional well-being, and optimal academic achievement. Decades of social science research documents that children develop optimally when reared by their two biological parents in a low conflict marriage. The limited research advocating childrearing by homosexual parents has severe methodological limitations. There is significant risk of harm inherent in exposing a child to the homosexual lifestyle. Given the current body of evidence, the American College of Pediatricians believes it is inappropriate, potentially hazardous to children, and dangerously irresponsible to change the age-old prohibition on homosexual parenting, whether by adoption, foster care, or reproductive manipulation. This position is rooted in the best available science.” The statement is backed by 44 references.

While there are fewer reliable research studies on same-sex parenting in Australia, there was a 1996 study of Australian primary school children from three family contexts (married heterosexual couples, cohabiting heterosexual couples and homosexual couples) which found that in all areas of education (language, mathematics, social studies, sport, sociability, class work and attitudes to learning) children from same-sex couples had the lowest performance of the three groups. That study concludes – “Married couples seem to offer the best environment for a child’s social and educational development.” (1)

A major American study reviewing the literature on same-sex parenting came to these conclusions – “Children of homosexuals will - 1) be more frequently subjected to parental instability (of residence and sexual partners) and 2) have poorer peer and adult relationships and will be more apt to 3) become homosexual, 4) be unstable (have emotional problems and difficulty forming lasting bonds), and 5) be sexually precocious and promiscuous.” (2)

You will receive reports of many studies alleged to show that children raised in same-sex households do as well as other children. I have read many such studies and found them to have major methodological flaws. Many of these studies are conducted by those who have a same-sex orientation or who support the homosexual agenda. Two American sociologists, Judith Stacey and Timothy Biblarz, who are openly supportive of the homosexual cause, have admitted that bias is a real factor in these studies. They write that this bias has “hampered the intellectual progress in the field” and that in 21 studies researchers “frequently downplay findings indicating difference”. (3)

Please also find attached a copy of a recent paper “Gay and Lesbian Parenting : Issues and Controversies” by Dr Walter Schumm, Professor of Family Studies at Kansas State University. I would agree with his opening sentence – “There is an inherent risk that anyone who has anything cautious to say about gay male or lesbian parenting will be misunderstood at best and vilified at worst.” Dr Schumm supports the above concerns about bias, relationship instability, and potential adverse effects on any children involved.

Same-sex couples may tell me I am wrong, and that they can love a child enough to overcome these problems. My concern is that love is not all that is needed, at least when it comes to good parenting. To quote from family researchers Glenn Stanton and Bill Maier – “The two most loving mothers in the world can’t be a father to a little boy. Love can’t equip two mothers to teach a little boy how to be a man. Likewise, the two most loving men can’t be a mother to a child .. Love does little to help a man to teach a little girl how to be a woman. Can you imagine two men guiding a girl through her first menstrual cycle ..?” (4)

You may recall that our various state reproductive technology and adoption acts focus on the welfare of the child to be created or placed. I would argue that this key principle that the rights and interests of the child are paramount should not be bent to meet the wishes of same-sex couples. A baby being created or placed in our society should have the reasonable expectation, other things being equal, of the care and affection of both a mother and a father. I believe that our children are too important to be treated as laboratory animals in a potentially dangerous social experiment.

I am willing to appear before the Social Development Committee to provide an oral submission and to expand on any area of my submission as needed.

Yours sincerely,

DR ROBERT POLLNITZ

- (1) Sotirios Sarantakos, *Children in Three Contexts*, *Children Australia*, vol 21 no 3, 1996, pp 23-31
- (2) Paul Cameron, *Homosexual parents testing ‘common sense’ – A literature review emphasizing the Golombok and Tasker longitudinal study of lesbians’ children*, *Psychological Reports*, vol 85, 1999, p 282
- (3) Judith Stacey and Timothy Biblarz, *How does the sexual orientation of parents matter?*, *American Sociological Review*, 66, 2001, pp 159-183
- (4) Glenn Stanton and Bill Maier, *Marriage on Trial*, Downers Grove, Illinois, Intervarsity Press, 2004, p 71