



Brief Submission

Australian Senate Inquiry Marriage Equality Amendment Bill

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Executive Summary

Positioned on the absolute ocean front and just a short stroll via seaside boardwalk to the enchanting Airlie Beach resort village; with its relaxed atmosphere and collection of eclectic shops and cafes; lies the Coral Sea Resort. The 4 ½ star Coral Sea Resort rates as one of the most appealing Airlie Beach Resorts in the magical Whitsundays, combining first class facilities with award winning legendary hospitality. At Coral Sea Resort we pride ourselves on providing the highest quality of service to all clients and we have been delivering destination wedding services for 14 years to the local Australian and international community.

In search of brevity, this submission aims to outline the position of Coral Sea Resort and provide supporting evidence as to the important benefits to the Coral Sea Resort Business that legalising gay marriage in Australia would have.

The historical and contemporary debates concerned with the legalisation of gay marriage within Australia, and throughout the world, have proven to be complicated, emotionally driven, misinformed and have ultimately met significant controversy (Baird, 2005). It is noteworthy to mention, the position of the Coral Sea Resort with regard to gay marriage proudly aligns with our work ethic which states "that we do not discriminate against individuals or couples based on their, age, religion, ethnicity or sexuality".

Despite the aforementioned issues, Coral Sea Resort is actively aware of the positive impact and financial benefits that would be a direct result of legalizing gay marriage in Australia. These benefits would greatly promote not only our Resort, but vitally increase the overall tourism generated across the Whitsundays.

As an active member of Gay and Lesbian Tourism Australia (GALTA) and the International Gay and Lesbian Association (IGALTA) Coral Sea Resort endeavours to provide the highest quality of wedding service to all people. Coral Sea Resort has previously been utilised by all members of the public, including Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender clients. To ensure the return business of all our clients, regardless of sexuality, Coral Sea Resort guarantees all clients that the service they receive, privacy they require and any ongoing needs throughout their stay are met to the highest standards by all staff associated with Coral Sea Resort.

Position of Coral Sea Resort

The debate over same-sex marriage has been prevalent with hostility and resistance across a variety of countries and forums. Opponents argue providing homogenous rights between both heterosexual and homosexual couples would destroy the family values and sanctity of tradition (Ford, 1995). Of course, Coral Sea Resort understands that beliefs are subjective and don't intend to challenge those beliefs, rather create an environment whereby all individuals regardless of beliefs or sexuality are not discriminated against. At Coral Sea Resort we view ourselves as business and community leaders in this area by promoting a discrimination free environment.

Why does the Coral Sea Resort want to supply our services to same-sex couples?

Gay Tourism or LGBT Tourism is a form of niche tourism marketed to gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people. According to a 2000 Tourism Intelligence International report, 10% of international tourists were gay and lesbian, accounting for more than 70 million trips worldwide. The gay and lesbian segment is estimated at \$55 billion annual market as of 2007 and Coral Sea Resort expects that this figure has grown substantially since this figure was established.

Benefits to Coral Sea Resort

Financial

What positive economic impact would same sex marriages have on the Coral Sea Resort?

Coral Sea Resort is aware of the substantial money (also known as the "pink dollar" or "pink pound") generated by this marketing niche, and have made it a point to align themselves with the gay community and gay tourism campaigns.

Coral Sea Resort has taken the first step in capturing this niche market by joining Gay and Lesbian Tourism Australia (GALTA) and the International Gay and Lesbian association (IGALTA) listing our accommodations as one of the most appealing gay managed deluxe luxury resorts in the Whitsundays.

Positive Economic Impacts on Coral Sea Resort include:

- Increased Wedding Bookings, resulting in increased revenue
- Cost effective niche marketing allowing our marketing budget to go further, allowing Coral Sea Resort to advertise with greater frequency or to use a more comprehensive media mix such as additional advertising rights on the GALTA website which currently has up to 12 Banner Ad slots available
- The gay and lesbian niche has more disposable income with a propensity to travel further, trending towards more diversified and unique wedding, accommodation and travel experiences, such as the Coral Sea Resort and Whitsundays.
- Ensuring staff of Coral Sea Resort overcome any insensitivity or phobias resulting in a relaxed experience and an increase in repeat business.

Weddings create a diverse amount of revenue across different areas from the tourism industry, inclusive of bookings, travel, photography, restaurants, retail through to the payment of state certificates to the government.

Tourism - Keep it in Australia

The tourism industry in the region directly accounts for over 6800 jobs and contributes over \$514 million to the economy. The aim is to develop the tourism industry in the Whitsunday region to be one of the top 10 tropical island destinations in the world.

There is also an opportunity to develop this niche based tourism by establishing gay tourism holiday accommodation. The *Mackay Whitsunday Tourism Opportunity Plan* outlines opportunities for new tourism infrastructure in the region.

Progressive duplication of sections of the Proserpine to Shute Harbour Road, in conjunction with intersection up grades at major junctions, will also facilitate and assist in the development of tourism in this area. The Whitsunday Islands and the coastal region are a prime tourism destination supported by established airport infrastructure.

The Queensland Government, with the support of the Whitsunday Regional Council, is delivering an upgrade to the Whitsunday Coast Airport Passengers terminal to improve the airport's appearance, functionality and passenger comfort. Being the closest mainland airport to Airlie Beach and the Whitsunday Islands, this airport is an important gateway into one of Australia's most popular tourist destinations.

The economic importance of tourism in Airlie Beach is illustrated by a relatively large number of tourism businesses in the region with the proportion of businesses that are tourism related being above the national average of 20.2% at 21.9%.

Conclusion

The region is expected to increase in population by about 100 000 over the next 20 years, with the majority of growth to occur in the principal regional centre of Mackay. It is anticipated that the major centres of Bowen, Moranbah, Proserpine, Sarina, Airlie Beach and Cannonvale will also experience a level of growth.

Coral Sea Resort looks forward to prospering even further by acknowledging and introducing the niche market that is Same Sex Marriage. Everyone deserves equality.

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