

A submission with regards to the Senate enquiry into marriage equality,

Marriage, a state-sanctioned union between two people, has long been considered a foundation of family life. It represents and indeed embodies the intention of forming loving, perpetual commitments between individuals; the undertaking to experience the highs and lows of life together, whatever they may hold. It's an institution under attack. Between soaring divorce rates, a societal shift toward de-facto relationships and an internal inability to keep up with the changes in values and acceptance that have come to define much of the modern world we inhabit.

Marriage is certainly under threat, but the danger doesn't lie with those advocating for same-sex marriage. Rather, the institution itself, through perpetuating the injustices and discrimination of the past is threatening to ensure its own irrelevance. Young people are no longer seeing marriage as a foundation of love and commitment, but rather as a discriminatory institution, more interested in keeping people out than addressing the reasons why they're turning away. Marriage is losing its ability to accurately reflect the way the modern world defines interpersonal relationships.

Among the many threats to marriage, there are groups genuinely fighting to be able to share in this tradition; that still view marriage as a foundation of true life-long commitment. They are however faced with all the same arguments that have been put forward in favour of discrimination in the past. Marriage, as with other social institutions, benefits from flexibility to societal change. An institution which cannot change along with society negates itself to only being truly relevant as a part of history. Had marriage continued to exclude those of different races in times past, and ignored the changes happening in the society that supported it, we would not be here having this debate today, as marriage would have lost its relevance to the people.

We can continue down that path, ignoring change and fighting for the status quo, but the choice is as simple as – do we, as Australians want to be looking back 20 years from now and seeing how we stood on the progressive, just and 'right' side of history, or do we want marriage to just be another institution not fit for the continued passage of time?

There's no room for a slippery slope argument here, there are no dogs or small children fighting for their right to consent to marry the people they love, there's merely a movement to remove the 'but different' which has for too long followed the 'equal' nature of all people. Civil unions do not go far enough towards removing discrimination, arguments which suggest they do both discriminate against individuals and suggest that there is nothing special nor unique about marriage itself. Legalising same-sex marriage will not lead to any number of detestable permutations which the imagination can give life to, nor should such arguments be given any merit – they are but a cruel insult truly springing from a lack of understanding or an abundance of hate.

There's definitely room for thinking of the children, but children are being raised by same-sex couples regardless of what the law says about marriage. Children are being brought into the world by married couples, teenagers, de-facto couples, single parents and in numerous other arrangements. The law should be reflective of the realities of life, rather than ideals being pronounced from above. For those who strongly desire to raise children, a way will be found quite regardless of marriage, just as many who lack such a desire still seek recognition by the institute of marriage.

LGBTIQ children on the other hand definitely need to be given thought. Maintaining the status quo of discrimination sends out a clear message to these children that they are less than their peers; that there is something wrong with them; that regardless of everything else, society will never recognise their love, nor give it the respect it deserves. These are the vulnerable children who need to be regarded - the ones with the most to lose. A life full of adventure, love, trials, time devoted to learning and exploring... and maybe even changing the world, be it a little or a lot, is the most valuable thing we have a people. This is what these children stand to, and far too often do lose. Their lives can be devalued by society, or taken by those toiling under the 'values' or the past, or lost to the melancholy of despair. These are the children discrimination hurts the most. Children of same-sex couples merely grow up with a greater understanding and compassion for the struggles of their peers.

The passing of this Bill into law is of vital importance to all Australians. Law-makers have rightly acted in recent years in favour of removing discrimination faced by LGBTIQ Australians under Commonwealth law, and the passing of this Bill will give true force to this intention – it will send out a message to all that marriage is still relevant, that all people are equal and capable of the same love, and that Australia is choosing to be on the right side of history.