

30 March 2012

Committee Secretary
Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Marriage Equality Amendments Bill

Dear Senators

Thank you for the opportunity to share with you my views on this Bill. As a Catholic and a Christian I strongly support any changes to effect same sex marriage in Australia.

I belong to a conservative Catholic community and we have had considerable debate on this matter in various forums. I have observed with interest as the debate has moved away from scripture to arguments about the institution of marriage being the primary vehicle for maintaining the family unit which in turn is the best way of producing and nurturing children. I believe that this is not only a poor argument in terms of the evolution of family structures over time, but it also mitigates against broadening our concept of where the responsibility for nurturing children lies.

I would argue that as we have moved away from extended family and communities raising children to small nuclear family structures we have seen progressively greater disintegration of families under pressure. I agree that children need both males and females as role models, but there is no reason as to why these role models should be constrained to a small family unit. We take as models a range of people in our lives, from grandparents, uncles, aunts and other relatives to friends, neighbours, teachers, employers and people important in our spiritual development. Male and female role models are not confined to our mothers and fathers. The key to raising children is love, care, kindness and a willingness to share responsibility by the broader community for those children.

As to men and women in marriage being, as I have often heard it, the 'ideal' means for producing children and raising them, this is nonsensical and demeans relationships such as defacto couples, adopting parents, foster carers, people unable to have children, and layers of generations and extended family and friends sharing the care of children. A loving same sex couple is as likely to provide a warm and safe environment for children as a heterosexual married couple and may be more likely to broaden the reach of care and draw in support from others in the community.

The argument for same sex marriage is above that of the nature of the family and rearing of children. It is about ensuring equality where people wish to make a binding commitment to someone they love. Just as that right exists for heterosexual couples, so should it for same sex couples. We have worked long and hard for equality and to remove discrimination in Australia and this is a logical next step.

Love and attraction are such ineffable things, incomprehensible as to from where they derive, inexplicable as to how they work to bind people together, awesome when they work to link people together for life. Where people are bound by love that leads them to wish to enter into life long commitments bound by law, who are we to stop them because they make up a same sex couple. Our Father God and his son Jesus, who made us out of love, do not condemn them as we do through our current legislation, making them less worthy of connection and protection in law. They continue to love them as equally as any other individuals and as equally as any other couples. And who are we to say that it is not the Holy Spirit, the breath of God's love who binds and connects us, who brings same sex couples together.

I appreciate this opportunity to share my thoughts with you and I commend to you the changes to the Marriage Act. May God bless your deliberations.

Yours in Christ

Andriana Koukari