

Re: Marriage Equality

Dear Sir or Madam,

Only recently has it come to my attention that the Australian Government are seeking submissions from the general public regarding marriage equality for same-sex couples to recognise, certify and affirm same-sex relationships. I would like to bring to your attention that there has been a landslide-typified movement from the homophobic movement within Australia to devalue, disenfranchise and destabilise the gay community based on age-old prejudice stemming from deep-seated homophobia either from religion or from uneducated self-satisfying bigots who are happy to stand on their soapboxes dictating how others should live. Where is the freedom and support within the community to live as one would like?

Being a gay person is not a choice - time and time again it has been proven that homosexuality can not be caught, passed along, or decided upon as a lifestyle choice. You are either born gay or one of many options along the diversity rainbow.

How is it fair to gay couples who contribute and provide to society, particularly to the same society that they share with the homosexual bigots, are denied the right to be protected within the law and the fabric of society? Couples whether gay or straight should be embraced and woven into this fabric because this is what makes a society - and inclusion of all parties.

On a personal note I have been with my partner for 4 years. We both started dating quite young and have stayed strong together. He was involved in a horrific car accident early into our relationship requiring steel pieces in his femur, steel wires in his foot, a stent in his heart to stop it bleeding, stitches from his crown to the base of his nose and rhinoplasty to help put his face back together. Even now 3 years later there have been several further operations and extended physio so he can walk properly.

What this has to do with general society is that it was a group effort to get my partner back to where he was before the accident. At the time of the accident he went straight into the ICU. Since I wasn't a direct family member I was unable to go straight in with him. It was devastating to have to wait in the waiting room when all I could think about is that I was close to losing the person I loved and there was nothing I could do about it - I even begged the nurse to let me see him and thankfully after an hour she complied. As I type this, I am crying because it still hurts that I could have never got to say goodbye if he died. It is not society's issue to be concerned that we were in a gay relationship - we both need the protection that marriage equality will provide. I could have been denied the last opportunity ever to say goodbye simply because the government provides no protection to us.

Please take to heart that there are gay people within the community who will greatly benefit from the protection that marriage equality will provide. There will always be those who refuse to recognise the needs of others - my civil partnership to my partner does not affect in any way the relationship of those who reject the idea of equality. Civil Partnerships support the fabric of society. Same sex marriage supports the fabric of society. Civil Unions are in no way a substitution for Gay marriage as it assigns a different status to groups of people and creates prejudice and preconceived ideas about the validity of certain relationships. Please ignore those who stand on soapboxes and try to speak for everyone - society needs diversity.

Gay marriage has existed for thousands of years as seen in China, the Roman Empire and Spain. Gay marriage is not a new "trend" as some have proposed, and more broadly, gay

marriage has not caused detrimental effects.

There are quite a few countries around the globe who have embraced same-sex marriage. These countries have not experienced the negative effects that have been touted. Countries including Argentina, Belgium, Canada, Iceland, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, South Africa and Sweden have all embraced same-sex marriage.

Marriage equality is being considered in Colombia, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Luxembourg, Nepal, New Zealand, Nigeria (where two women is allowed if a woman has no child and the husband dies), and the United Kingdom.

Civil unions in any guise can be had in Andorra, Australia, Brazil, Colombia, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, New Zealand, Slovenia, Switzerland, United Kingdom and Uruguay. This also includes various parts of the USA and Mexico.

Let me refer you to what the American Psychological Association had to say about gay marriage in 2004:

The institution of civil marriage confers a social status and important legal benefits, rights, and privileges. ... Same-sex couples are denied equal access to civil marriage. ... Same-sex couples who enter into a civil union are denied equal access to all the benefits, rights, and privileges provided by federal law to married couples ... The benefits, rights, and privileges associated with domestic partnerships are not universally available, are not equal to those associated with marriage, and are rarely portable ... Denial of access to marriage to same-sex couples may especially harm people who also experience discrimination based on age, race, ethnicity, disability, gender and gender identity, religion, and socioeconomic status ... the APA believes that it is unfair and discriminatory to deny same-sex couples legal access to civil marriage and to all its attendant benefits, rights, and privileges.

I wouldn't wait a priest or anyone similar to marry me if they didn't want to. I would want someone marrying me that really wanted to do it.

Same sex marriage strengthens the institution of marriage and provides legal protection for children of gay and lesbian parents.

Please think with your head and not your heart.  
I know you'll make the right decision

Martin Clarke