

SUBMISSION ON THE MARRIAGE EQUALITY AMENDMENT BILL 2010

Dear Committee Secretary,

As a conservative Victorian I support the Marriage Equality Bill currently under consideration, on the basis of three key points, and with two key considerations.

My first point is that of the "gay lobby": that people should be allowed to marry their loved ones regardless of what gender they are. I find it clearly discriminates against gays and lesbians and stands as a major barrier to them forming lasting relationships when society will not respect their relationships equally. For this reason I also very strongly oppose the idea of "civil unions", which entrenches the second class citizen status of this group of Australians.

My second reason is probably best expressed through a number of the submissions you have undoubtedly received from those opposed to gay marriage. While 18 months ago I could not have cared less about this issue, seeing the vile, disingenuous claims of some "Christians" about gay people has convinced me that in fact this is of importance and does merit immediate action. While people compare homosexuality to bestiality or incest it is clear to me we must be active in ensuring gay and lesbian people are protected from, not defined by, such ridiculous and indefensible slander. I use the term advisedly, but people comparing a loving relationship between two people who want to commit to each other for life to having sex with a dog are so misguided as to be outright evil.

This raises my first caveat to my support for this legislation. I think it is very important that no one is required to perform any marriage service. This is as true for any other religious (or civil) service. A Catholic priest should not be required to perform a Jewish marriage; and likewise no religious person should be required to act against their faith in marrying two people of the same sex. Freedom of religion, and freedom from the religions of others, is a central tenant of the vast majority of Australians' political views; this legislation must not only defend that by allowing same sex couples the right to be married, but protect it for those whose beliefs are different.

My third reason for supporting this legislation is a far more personal reason, and is ultimately the reason why I have made this submission rather than remain as disengaged as most people will. If I have a son or daughter who turns out to be gay, I want them to have the same opportunities, the same bright future, the same rights under law, and the same supportive society that everyone else takes for granted. I want to be able to look them in the eye and tell them I supported this legislation. I want them to aspire to finding a loving, caring, lifelong partner just as any other child growing up does. I want them to have the same freedom I have. In fact, regardless of whether my children turn out to be gay or straight, I want them to be safe from the extreme bigotry of the religious right who think they have a god given duty to impose their views on others.

My only other consideration for all of this is that I remain strenuously opposed to "reverse discrimination". I do not believe that gay marriage should be funded or supported by the government by one single cent more than any straight marriage. Likewise, there should be no preferential tax treatment or legal advantage to a gay (or straight) marriage. I ask the enquiry to consider where they may be areas where such discrimination may arise.

As a quick aside regarding the issues raised by the more moderate or passive opponents to

this bill, I point out that not one argument has been made against this bill that was not made against interracial marriages. I'd ask you to reconsider your position; just as ending racial discrimination did not destroy the institution of marriage or bring down society, nor will this change. However shrill the voices claiming it will are, their apoplexy is utterly unfounded, if it is even sincere.

As a final thought, I read that one of the submissions to your enquiry compared gay marriage to defecating in public. If this is the level of discourse of those opposed to the bill I plead with my fellow conservatives to distance yourselves from these disgraceful people and ensure that conservatism in Australia does not go the way of the Tea Party in the United States (or worse).

Thank you all for your time and consideration of my submission, and for your ongoing service to our country.

Regards,

-Andrew Goff