

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

Dear Committee,

I write regarding my support for Australian Marriage Equality. As a Minister of Religion and as a citizen of this country, whose rules and statutes were built upon Christian values, I support marriage equality because it places us all, appropriately, equal before God and before one another; all human, all loved, all capable of being loved, all capable of loving. As our country has matured it has endeavoured to, also appropriately, right the wrongs of our forebears ... we have accepted the equality of women, of Aboriginals, of those who have a disability, of those who have moved here from overseas and we have adopted policies and rules to protect those who are vulnerable such as the right of children to live in safe environments of care and love. All of these things are good and indeed wonderful achievements.

In the same way that I stood in my lounge room hugging my baby grandson and smiled at him and told him what a wonderful land he lived in as, on the television before us, Mr. Kevin Rudd and members of the Parliament laid an apology before the traditional custodians of this land – so, I look forward to us sharing the same freedom that the rest of us have to express who we are and the commitment to love that we wish to make regardless of our sexual orientation; and I pray that we don't have to wait so long that one day we are fixed on the TV watching an apology.

God loves all people; God indeed made all people in God's image and this we understand to be an image of generousness, graciousness, forgiveness, love and hope. God does not stand for fear but rather invites us to learn about ourselves and our God through these times, God does not tell us to stand still for we are all on a journey in which we develop, seek deeper into our faith and find God in places that once we'd never have thought God would be. God does not want us, or anyone else, to be stuck in a place of hopelessness and depression because they cannot be true to who they are and who they love; God is the God who brought us all new life and freedom by taking our suffering and inviting us to move through this (painful though that may be) to a place with God on the other side of pain that is joy and light personified. Surely, all of us want all people in Australia no matter what their background, sexual orientation, class, marital status, education, ability or any other difference, to have joy and live in a place of light as opposed to the darkness of despair and hatred.

I believe that Australian Marriage Equality would strengthen family life in Australia by promoting understanding and acceptance of difference in all its forms; this can only be a good thing which may not be possible in this generation but hopefully in the next.

I am well aware that this letter will be in stark contrast to some of my colleagues in Ministry and I cannot begin to share with you the grief this causes. Using the Bible from a fundamentalist perspective to uphold attitudes of hatred through fear, to continue to argue that someone in the year 1500BC said we shouldn't be homosexual, to claim that a number of ambiguous quotes from the Bible make marriage equality wrong in 2012 is, in my view, very sad in deed. Such people need to re-read the Bible to see that there are two opposing creation stories (how can these dichotomies be held together by Biblical literalism?), that God uses culturally dubious people of the day to spread God's Word in the Old testament, in the New Testament and continues to do so ... how revealing it may be to them one day to find Heaven full of just the people they have crucified and ridiculed.

It is also ludicrous to argue that marriage equality would break down our Christian culture; I would claim that the media and the capitalism of this world (which we all indulge in) have had, and will continue to have, a far greater impact on breaking down our sense of community and sense of neighbourly love than Australian marriage equality, in fact, it could be claimed that this might help to rebuild Christian values fast being eroded by common culture.

In conclusion, I wish for my friends who are Lesbian to have the same right that I have as a Heterosexual; to publicly declare and gain the support of family and friends in a public space for a union of love and passion.

I understand that your task is not an easy one and the calls on you will come from all sides and with vastly divergent opinions. As you undertake this task may the God of love be with you, may you be aware of the justice and compassion of Jesus Christ and may the guidance of the Holy Spirit be upon you and give you strength.

Peace be with you,

Rev. Jill Lienert.