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Subject : "Marriage Equality Amendment Bill 2010" Submission

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

To the Committee:

In opening I must say that I neither support nor oppose the concept of "Same Sex Marriage". I do, however, support the same rights to marriage being provided to all who "desire" it. As such, in this submission I shall concentrate more on how I think it should be applied.

When I last looked, I am sure I saw that we were just beginning the second year of the second decade of the 21st Century and not still living in the Middle Ages or, for that matter, late 19th Century. All laws are and should be dynamic, not static, as some would prefer and this should also apply to our laws relating to the "institution" of Marriage. I will support ANY and ALL legislation which removes the archaic provision that "marriage is (retricted to being solely) between a man and a woman", etc, and respects the rights of ALL citizens of "legal age" to get married if they wish to do so.

I understand that the intended private member's Bills in the "Lower House" and the private senator's Bill in the "Upper House", which this committee is inquiring into, both provide an exemption which allows the various "religions" to maintain their stance against same sex marriage by essentially making same sex marriage a "civil" matter. I would like to suggest an amendment to this "protection". I would like to suggest that this "protection" be retained, but modified to allow individual Rabbis, Priests, Pastors, etc, who have been appropriately licenced by the relevant jurisdiction to, at their own individual and personal discretion and according to their own conscience, perform these services and, if their respective "church" disapproves of this, then to provide the clergyman or clergywoman the protection of the Fair Work Act, under the "Unlawful Dismal" provisions of that Act if their actions so displease their church as to lead the church to consider their dismissal on what some would, hopefully, see as unjust grounds. This would, or at least should, protect those members of a particular church's clergy who have not only spoken out in favour and support of the rights of same sex couples, but have take the additional step of actually performing a marriage ceremony should this legislation be passed.

Finally, whilst I am an atheist and can see many logical reasons why religions are becoming relics of a bygone era, I believe that everyone has the right to practice their own beliefs, etc, so long as they don't force their views onto me. When it comes to issues of conscience (eg abortion, voluntary euthanasia, RU486, same sex marriage, etc), I believe that it is none of my business to tell someone else how to treat their own body. I believe that if you oppose these issues you are single minded, but those, like myself, who support these issues are in fact saying that whilst we as individuals may not agree with you, we will "support" your rights to have and put into effect "your" views, without discrimination.

So, there are two and only two choices here. You can support the views of the extreme religious right in our society who say that their way is the only way or you can support those who, like myself,

support both sides by saying that this is an individual and personal matter and so long as it doesn't affect me, I have no problem with it and, hopefully, everyone can be happy.

I close with the following quote that has been "attributed" to Voltaire: ""I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it." [I prefer this variation, myself: "I disagree with what you say, but will defend and protect your right to say it."]

Thanking you for letting me participate in this matter.

Regards,

Paul Myers