

Submission to the Senate inquiry into in the Marriage Equality Amendment Bill 2010

I wish to make a submission to the above inquiry in support of the proposed amendments.

The separation of Church and State issues is important in determining the governance responsibilities and areas of responsibility of our various levels of Governments in Australia. It is my view that it is not the Federal Government's role to make moral or spiritual judgements about its citizen's lives and rights in relation to their sexual preferences or lives – be that by choice or genetic pre-disposition-and it is vital to Democracy and the protection of each citizen's individual rights that each citizen is protected against the discrimination inherent in many fundamentalist and/or religious organizations and church's interpretation of religious text that would deny equal rights to all citizens.

I believe ALL citizens who share the same duties and responsibilities and are subject to the same taxation requirements, should share the SAME human rights- Including the right of same- sex couples to confirm their commitment to each other within the ceremony of marriage. I believe religious organizations should not be able to override such rights by claiming special circumstances based on their spiritual beliefs- especially when so many religious groups cannot even agree on those beliefs! It should not be the role of the Government to decide who is worthy of such a right and who is not, based on their sexuality, as it should not be based on the colour of their skin or how many toes they have. It should not be the role of the Government to be swayed in its' decisions by religious fundamentalists who often use bogus, misleading and often hateful speech in their opposition to this discussion.

It is bizarre that whilst on the one hand Government sees it necessary to protect so called minority groups- such as homosexuals- through Anti-Discrimination Laws it also sees fit to discriminate itself against them by denying them marriage equality. Much like saying it's ok to be Gay – just don't be TOO Gay!

Religious fundamentalists can't have it every way either. They cry outrage at so called "promiscuity" outside of marriage and yet in this instance they are fervent in their opposition to a declaration of love and commitment that would, one would think by its' very nature, be a public declaration of fidelity. In essence they would argue that Marriage is acceptable for heterosexuals but in no circumstances can it be acceptable to homosexuals. The debate around this is an old and weary one; a debate still being played out, sadly, by minorities of all types throughout the world. The acclamation of one group's rights at the denial of anothers. The Federal Australian Government should treat marriage equality as a human rights issue and an issue of ensuring that all its' citizens enjoy those equal rights.

Religious organisations also claim the sole right to determine the definition of 'Family'. We ALL have families. If fundamentalists wish to have a grading system, based on which 'family type' is better than another than that is, sadly, their concern. It is not, and should never be, the role of any Government to make moral judgements on the worthiness of individual family groups- be they nuclear families, gay families or single parent /de-facto families. The degree of Love in any relationship is not determined by the religious affiliation of those involved.

I support the current amendments in the Marriage Equality Amendment Bill 2010, which in no way preclude organised religions from continuing to deny same sex couples the right to such commitments within their churches, even though I still consider this discriminatory. But it does clearly highlight that their opposition to these amendments are not based on the affirmation of their rights but rather upon their denial of anothers.

I ask that the Committee of Inquiry evaluate all submissions on human rights grounds- not on religious dogma and I look forward to the day when this one

small step in the journey of equality and celebration of difference of ALL
Australians is seen as addressing another injustice that should no longer be
tolerated.

Yours Sincerely,
Michael McDougall.