

The Honourable Senators
Senate Inquiry into Marriage Law

Dear Senators

I believe that our nation needs to have a debate about marriage.

However, I believe the present approach of establishing a Senate Inquiry as well as House of Representatives consultation has not been the best way of doing it.

Democracy is about engaging all citizens on matters of importance, airing all the facts and opinions, allowing time for public debate and then taking the matter at hand to a vote.

With regards to this matter about possibly changing the Marriage Law to provide for access to marriage by same-sex couples, I believe that the democratic principles have not been employed sufficiently to allow you Honourable Senators to reach a veritably informed and balanced conclusion and therefore make recommendations on the matter to the Parliament.

I believe our society has only reached the stage of airing the matter in the nation and uncovering some of the facts and opinions. Activist groups on both sides of the question have provided something of the sort of facts and opinions needed, not only by you Honourable Senators, but by all citizens, to allow all to be properly equipped to continue the democratic process. Some of what I believe are vital facts regarding any possible change to the present Marriage Law have not, as far as I have been able to research, have not been publicised, or publicised well enough, to provide a perspective from which to consider all the implications of such proposed changes.

Engaging citizens is an important part of the process and if I wasn't 'party' to one of the activist groups I doubt if you would be receiving this item of correspondence. There were no advertisements in my local newspaper or any announcement over the local radio - I live in rural Australia, and these are the chief means employed to engage citizenry. Neither have I received any written correspondence from the Parliament, or your Inquiry, seeking to engage me on what I believe is a matter meriting such engagement. I have not seen published the terms of reference of your Inquiry in any of the usual places where a citizen may presume that if a matter of vital importance such as this is to be debated, then the outline would at least be well publicised, in ways that would reach a majority of electors. Could you provide me with such a list of the measures your Inquiry has taken that would show a sufficiently rigorous attempt to provide for engagement, informing and a deliberation on the matter, for a majority of electors?

I am positive that Honourable Senators will receive much correspondence for your Inquiry, but if a sufficiently rigorous process of engagement and information has not been undertaken, and proven quantitatively, then such correspondence would have to be seen for what it is, the results of activist engagement rather than citizen engagement.

Honourable Senators, in conclusion, I would ask that your Inquiry address the above matters I have outlined, recommending a more thorough process of engagement with the citizens of Australia on this matter and prepare them for deciding on the matter by way of a referendum/plebiscite vote to be held in conjunction with the next Commonwealth Parliamentary elections.

Yours faithfully

Fr Mick Mac Andrew
St Mary's Catholic Parish