

SUBMISSION NO. 213

AUTHORISED: 10-08-05 *hkh*

From: Stephen Lilley [REDACTED]
Sent: Saturday, 30 July 2005 3:43 PM
To: Monk, David (REPS)
Subject: Community submission to the Inquiry into Overseas Adoption

Dear Mr Monk,

I would like to make the following submission to the Inquiry into the Adoption of Children from Overseas.

The Australian Federal Government should not move to block same sex couples from adopting children from overseas. This is because sexuality has no relevance to an individuals character.

It is necessary for the government to assess a prospective parents character, in order to ensure the adopted child is going to be living in an appropriate environment. The factors that need to be considered are as follows:

There is adequate ongoing financial commitment to support the child. The family environment that the child will be living in is safe, nurturing, educational, loving, stable and will give that child every opportunity to become an effective contributor to the Australian community in adulthood.

That the family environment the prospective parents provide needs to be appropriate for a child to grow up in.

The sexuality of a person has no bearing on the above. This is clearly demonstrated in today's society. There are fine upstanding members of the Australian Community today, who are gay. For example, there are currently Judges, Police Officers, Health Professionals, Teachers, Sportsmen, etc who are all actively contributing to Australian society.

There will be heterosexual and homosexual couples, who will be very suitable as adoptive parents. Equally, there will be heterosexual and homosexual couples, who would not be desirable as parents.

Naturally, one major concern is that the child is not placed in a situation, where that child could be subject to abuse. There is no data to show that homosexual parents would be either more likely or less likely to abuse their children than heterosexual parents. This is because the Australian Census does not require Australians to identify their sexual preference. It is also unlikely that all Australians would answer such a question truthfully, as there is still a certain amount of homophobia in today's society. This would lead some being uncomfortable to be open about their sex lives. Without this sort of data it is impossible to determine if heterosexual or homosexual parents are more likely to commit child abuse.

We do know that there are families today in Australia with gay parents. To date there has been no data released to suggest that a parent's sexuality is detrimental to the upbringing of a child. The children may be exposed to bullying from peers at schools about their same sex parents. However, this should be treated as a school bullying issue that needs to be resolved, not a problem the parents have created

themselves. It is offensive to think that intolerance should be accepted in Australian Society today.

The parents sexuality will have no bearing on the child's sexuality. It is safe to assume that the majority of Gay Australians have heterosexual parents. There has been no data released that clearly shows what defines a person's sexuality. If heterosexual parents can nurture gay offspring, then it is reasonable to assume same sex parents will raise heterosexual offspring.

There is a fear that a lack of a role model of the opposite sex is detrimental to the upbringing of a child. It is important to remember that the extended family plays an important part in a child's development. This will be the same for same sex parent families. Gay Australians are family members too. It is important to remember many Australian children are currently growing up in single parent households, where there is no live in opposite sex parent. In these instances the extended family provides the role models needed and many children from these households grow up to be effective contributors to Australian society. This is the same for children growing up with same sex parents.

There are a minority of Australians, who hold the view that homosexuality is immoral based on the teachings of the bible. I think it is important to bear in mind the truths about homosexuality in Australia are as follows:

1. Homosexuality is a completely separate issue from Pedophilia. No data can be produced to show that homosexuals are either more likely or less likely to abuse children. This is because the full Australian Census does not require an individual to identify sexual preference. It is also unlikely that all Australians would answer such a question truthfully, as there is still a certain amount of homophobia in today's society. This would lead some being uncomfortable to be open about their sex lives. Without this sort of data it is impossible to determine if heterosexual or homosexuals are either more or likely to commit child abuse. Therefore, any information currently in the public domain is purely based on an individual's belief or idea and not fact.
2. Homosexual parents cannot teach their children to be gay. Sexuality is something an individual develops involuntarily, regardless of their environment. It is safe to assume gay people have heterosexual parents. Therefore, it is equally safe to say that most homosexual parents will nurture heterosexual children.
3. Homosexuals are no more promiscuous than heterosexuals. It is true that the gay people who are portrayed in the media may be more promiscuous than the average person. There are homosexual people, who may be promiscuous. However, there are also heterosexual people who are also promiscuous. In both cases it is highly unlikely that those with a more promiscuous lifestyle would be seeking to come adoptive parents.
4. Homosexuals are not drug takers. It is true that some gay people do get addicted to drugs. However, this is an issue that affects a lot of young Australians. Hence the Australian government's current advertising about the effects of taking drugs.

It is the duty of the Australian Government to ensure children are protected within our society and that they grow up in loving family environments. The government should also any legislation it introduces does not unnecassarlity discriminate against individuals for any reason at all.

It is important for the government to bear in mind there will be heterosexual and homosexual couples, who will make excellent parents for adopted children. Just as it is equally important to bear in mind there will be hetrosexual and homosexual couples who would not be suitable candidates.

Sexuality cannot be a consideration for determining the suitability of an individual person becoming an adoptive parent.

Yours Sincerely
Stephen Lilley

[REDACTED]
VIC [REDACTED]