



**PARENTS AND FRIENDS OF LESBIANS AND GAYS**

30 Helen Street, Newstead QLD 4006  
PO Box 1372, Eagle Farm BC QLD 4009  
Email: pflagbris@hotmail.com  
Phone: 07 3017 1739

Senate Legal and Constitutional Committee  
Marriage Equality Inquiry

7<sup>th</sup> July, 2009

## **Marriage Equality for Same Sex Attracted Couples**

As National Spokesperson for PFLAG Australia and President of Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) Brisbane, I/we are urging Federal Government to legislate the necessary changes that will recognise the human rights of our lesbian daughters and gay sons to allow their relationships to be legally recognised the same as their heterosexual siblings with the right to marry their chosen partner.

Heterosexual couples have the choice to marry, have a civil union or remain as a de facto couple. Our same sex attracted sons and daughters don't have that choice. As parents we believe this sends a clear message that the government sees same sex relationships as trivial and second rate.

Same sex couples have economic equality thanks to Kevin Rudd upholding his election promise. Now it's time to grant them further rights by legally recognising their relationships.

It should be noted that personal belief is not a reason to discriminate against minority groups.

**Legislation should be based on fact and research. It should also be noted that equality for same sex couples:**

- will not erode religious beliefs
- will not deprive children of opposite sex role models
- will not bring society into decay
- 

Homosexuality is a natural sexual variant, that is not a choice and it is was removed from the Mental Health list as a mental illness in 1983. Additionally it was removed from WHO list in 1990. Discrimination has continued over the years because of ignorance and people fearing what they don't understand.

Desmond Tutu has always equated discrimination against lesbians and gays similar to apartheid in South Africa. The blacks were persecuted for something over which they had no control.

### **Galaxy Poll:**

In June 2009 PFLAG was the major funding body for a Galaxy Poll which showed that 60% of Australians agree that same sex couples should be allowed the right to marry. This poll shows that Australians attitudes are changing and people are recognising the inequalities that same sex couples live with on a daily basis need to be amended.

**As parents we are calling for:**

Legislative changes to legally recognise same sex attracted couples relationships which will allow them the same rights as their siblings which is the right to marry their partner of choice.

**Legislation has changed to allow same sex marriage in:**

- Canada
- South Africa
- Spain
- Belgium
- Netherlands
- Six States in the USA have introduced marriage equality

In 2010, Nepal will introduce same sex marriage legislation with Iceland, Portugal and some South American countries like Venezuela and Uruguay soon to follow.

The right for same sex couples to marry would remove the contradictions and inconsistencies between state and federal legislation. Legislation needs to be uniform for same sex couples the same as it is for their heterosexual siblings.

**Changes to legislation will provide:**

- Respect and stability
- Security
- Responsibility to partner and children
- Protection for partners as next of kin
- Legal documentation if the relationship is questioned
- A sense of worth and value to their relationship; and
- Equal status to their siblings

Personally, as a parent it is heartbreaking to know that my straight son will be able to celebrate with family and friends when he chooses to marry but my gay son will never be able to celebrate his relationship in the same way because he has no choice. As it stands society doesn't even recognise his relationship and never will until legislation and out dated thinking changes in this country.

Yours truly,

Shelley Argent OAM  
President PFLAG Brisbane Inc.  
National Spokesperson  
PFLAG AUSTRALIA