

This submission is on behalf of the Australian Gay and Lesbian Christian Network

As a collective of Christian organisations (The Australian Gay & Lesbian Christian Network) who specifically minister to gay and lesbian people of faith and religion we urge the Australian Government to change the Marriage Act and remove the discrimination currently experienced by same-sex couples.

We believe that marriage is a civil institution and as such is not owned by a particular religion. Marriage for some centuries now has included a religious ceremony. This was not always the case and many heterosexual couples in Australia now choose to marry without a religious ceremony. Opposition to gay marriage by some Christian groups and denominations is inconsistent with the ethos we espouse in Australia that every human being deserves to be treated with dignity, respect and equality.

Within the Christian world there exists some division over the issue of homosexuality. This however is slowly changing as more and more gay and lesbian people of faith come out and Christians realise homosexuality is an orientation not an abomination. In countries where same-sex marriage has been legalised a number of Christian denominations and individual churches now perform marriage ceremonies for their gay and lesbian congregants. We would like the same right here in Australia and is consistent with basic human rights and equality.

We further believe that those who, because of their beliefs, could not in good conscience perform same-sex ceremonies that their right also be respected. So instead of being forced into a corner where they would be accused of being discriminatory they have the choice to perform or not perform same-sex marriages. This shows respect for individual beliefs and is consistent with the current legislation that allows churches and religious organisation to not employ staff on the basis of their same-sex-orientation.

So in essence we believe same-sex couples should have all the rights, privileges and responsibilities that heterosexual couples have, whilst at the same time allow those of faith and religion to only perform ceremonies that are consistent with their beliefs. We support legislative change that reflects this.

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