

Marriage Equality Amendment Bill - Submission to Senate Committee

Positives – The proposed Bill speaks of equality and is right to do so. As Australians we rightly endeavour to avoid arbitrary discrimination against one another. It seems sensible for people who choose de-facto relationships or same sex relationships or the like, to do so under the regulation and protection of the law if our democratic society agrees.

Legislation with ceremony and regulation and certification might have the same benefits as such things already have for traditional marriage, and this clearly includes the division of property and superannuation and the like when one party dies or if they separate for any other reason.

Rights – I would tread more lightly in the matter of fundamental human rights. It seems to me that we are more inclined to speak of fundamental human rights most often when it is our own rights that we wish to assert. I would argue that we have very few rights and the only ones we have are those that are given to us and protected by others. We all have responsibilities to others and in this case I think that those who have been married under existing legislation with traditional understanding of the meaning of marriage have the right to retain that standing without another group not merely changing the law but changing the meaning of the word marriage itself.

Responsibilities – we all have the responsibility to see that others are not taken advantage of, and hence I agree that some legislation is required to regulate not just the successful long-term human relationships, but to provide for the fairest possible handling of human affairs when things go wrong. This is as true for traditional marriage as for any other human interpersonal relationships.

Many people in traditional one man/one woman marriages will feel violated to feel that their relationship has been reduced to equality with all or any other style of interpersonal relationship. I believe we need to protect the rights of married people by preserving the traditional meaning of marriage and by retaining the current definition in law.

Where does this leave us with regard to the current amendment Bill? I believe the proposed amendment must be rejected.

If we need to protect the rights of other people who choose a different or non-traditional style of interpersonal relationships then I suggest we need a separate piece of legislation and some different word(s) instead of marriage. Should we speak of “interpersonal union” or do we need to come up with a totally new word. The onus of inventing such a new word probably rightly lies with those who espouse the different styles of relationships. Society at large may already be prepared to accept as legal various non-traditional styles of relationship, and may agree that such relationships need to be enshrined and protected in legislation. However, we have some way to go before we are ready to relinquish the concept of traditional marriage and sell out the word itself which would leave many of us with no word to describe what we hold dear.

I write as one who is greatly blessed in my experience of, and richly supported in, a traditional marriage. I write as one who believes all rights are given to us by the Creator God and Lord of all nations. He loves us all but has also set before us right and wrong ways to go – in His mercy we will all one day be judged justly.

For the politically sensitive among us it may also be worth noting that if the “Greens” espouse the abolition of the traditional definition of marriage they should also note that many Christian people who are probably the strongest proponents of traditional marriage,

are also strong supporters of an environmentally sensitive approach to managing our world and its resources.

By all means go to work to protect people in the whole range of interpersonal relationships which exist in our democratic pluralist nation, but not at the expense of trying to empty the word marriage of its current meaning.

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