

25th August 2009

Re: Marriage Equality Amendment Bill 2009

I am writing to express my opposition to the Marriage Equality Amendment Bill.

I do so primarily because of concerns about (a) how it might affect attitudes to homosexuality in the community, and (b) the raising of children without both a male and female parent.

(a) attitudes to homosexuality in the community

I laud the idea of promoting the "acceptance and the celebration of diversity" in our community. I have ferociously criticized homophobia and I have been an advocate of anti-discrimination laws regarding superannuation and other financial matters. But we also have the duty to look beyond mere politics to facts. A number of studies point to the greater stresses that homosexual people in our community face, including greater rates of depression, suicide, and substance abuse.¹ This is a cause for compassion, not for judgmentalism. I would like to see these stresses reduced. As it stands, however, there seems to be no scientific evidence for the belief that homosexual and heterosexual lifestyles are identical. This claim appears to me to be simple propaganda.

¹ For one example, see 'Review Of Research On Homosexual Parenting, Adoption, And Foster Parenting', by George A. Rekers, Ph.D., Professor of Neuropsychiatry and Behavioral Science, University of South Carolina School of Medicine, Columbia, South Carolina

My concern with the Marriage Equality Amendment Bill is that it provides another step towards ignoring hard data in preference for ideological assertions, which only makes it more difficult to get to the root of the difficulties which homosexual people in our community face.

(b) raising children

Clearly the Marriage Equality Amendment Bill will also have implications for parenting. In the Rekers paper already cited, there are numerous disadvantages for children living with homosexual parents. Further, in a longitudinal study, Golombok *et al* found that children raised by homosexual people were more likely to become involved in homosexual relationships themselves.² In Australia, there has been research suggesting that children raised by homosexual people are confused about gender, perform less well academically, and have more problems with peer relationships than those with heterosexual parents.³ Our country is already beginning to feel the sub-optimal effects of such a large number of single-parent households. If, as research indicates, it is best for children to grow up in stable households with married (heterosexual) parents, I would be loath to see enshrined in law an ideology which will cause further complications for individual children as well as for the broader society.

Yours faithfully,

Golombok S. and Tasker F., 'Do parents influence the sexual orientation of their children? findings from a longitudinal study of lesbian families', in *Developmental Psychology* 1996: 32:1, p 3-11

³ Sarantakos S., 'Children in three contexts, family, educational and social development', in *Children Australia* 1996; 21:3, 23-31