Marriage Equality Inquiry Private Submission

Are we wiser than God and our forebears to think that we can somehow "improve" marriage by "adjusting" its constituent elements? I think not.

Senator Hanson-Young's bill expresses a long-cherished want, desire or aspiration on the part of a vocal minority rather than a pressing need for the majority of our society. However innocuous such an aspiration may appear to be there is bound up within it a more fundamental change to the very nature of marriage that I foresee has the potential to cause more damage than good.

Here are my reasons:

1. **Such a move tends to confuse the uniqueness of marriage with friendship and other legitimate forms of human relationship.** Marriage is more than just a friendship or even a committed partnership such as a de facto relationship. It is the unique expression of love and trust between a man and a woman that enables them to function "as one" by mutual agreement and commitment for the rest of their lives, and which society recognises as wholesome, valid and desirable for all concerned. No other form of relationship enjoys that status, and to attempt to elevate into that status a kind of relationship that does not enjoy widespread acceptance in society is inherently destabilising to the well-being of marriage as an honoured institution.

2. **Changing the legal definition and basis of marriage to include same gender couples is not a step towards equality that such couples need**. Recent changes of legislation have gone a long way to addressing the legal, financial and inheritance rights of same gender couples. This is the way to address such matters of inequality rather than attempting to change the nature of marriage itself.

3. **Redefining marriage to "include" same gender couples will not promote unity and equality in our country**. Such a change will cause great grief not just to Christians, but to Muslims, and many other religious and ethnic people-groups in Australia. The desire for change by our homosexual friends must be weighed carefully against the opposition to such change from a wide diversity of other groups in our nation. I cannot see that gains will outweigh losses in such a decision. To change the basis of marriage to include same gender couples could potentially incite civil disobedience in a number of religious and ethnic circles, and this kind of problem is the last thing Australia needs, now or at any time in the future.

Please leave marriage as it is, between a man and a woman to the exclusion of all others. Senator Hanson-Young's bill has the feel of an ideologically driven social re-engineering project about it. But we are talking about something that will directly affect the wellbeing of parents and children on both sides of such a change, not just same-gender households!

Thank you,

Steven Nicholson