

Dear Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee,

This is my submission to your inquiry into marriage equality. I am fully in favour of the Marriage Equality Amendment Bill 2009.

I am a homosexual person who has been in a loving same-sex relationship for over 12 years. Even though I have no great desire to get married, I find the marriage act as it currently stands a repugnant piece of legislature that has no place in a just and tolerant society. There are people in same-sex relationships who would like to get married, and to forbid them from doing so while allowing people in different-sex relationships that right is blatantly unfair and insulting to their relationship.

Since the marriage act was amended to its current discriminatory form in 2004, four different-sex couples in my circle of close friends have decided to publicly declare their love for and commitment to each other.

The first couple invited my partner and me to their ceremony. We had given them a lot of help in organising and preparing their wedding. We, and they, were horrified to discover that the odious words of the amended act, "marriage is between a man and a woman, to the exclusion of all others," were uttered by the celebrant during the ceremony. The first act of their married life together was to apologise to their friends for inadvertently insulting them in public.

The next couple had also attended that wedding and were equally appalled by the offensive bigoted remark. They promised us that they would carefully proofread the celebrant's script and ensure that their ceremony did not include any assertion that their union was somehow special because of their sex difference. This they did successfully.

After that, we heard that there had been a crackdown on celebrants and that they were required to include the full discriminatory wording of the amended act in every ceremony. When the third couple invited us to their wedding, our dignity forced us to decline the invitation. Our friends understood, but our absence from the ceremony was felt.

The fourth couple decided that they did not want to be part of an institution which celebrates some loving partnerships while discriminating against others. They held a mock wedding, an unofficial declaration of their love which did not denigrate any of their friends and family who did not fit into the man/woman relationship category.

This last ceremony was what a wedding should be - the celebration of

two people's decision to marry because they love each other enough to publicly announce their love and commit to caring for each other. This is why I had always enjoyed attending weddings before 2004 - not because they are a man and a woman, and certainly not, as some people claim, because they are going to reproduce, but because I was witnessing two friends declaring their affection for each other and sharing that declaration with their friends and family. However, since 2004, that enjoyment has been spoilt by the amendment which erroneously suggests that somehow marriage should be the exclusive right of man/woman couples and denied to other loving couples who do not fit into that category.

Far from "protecting the sanctity of marriage," the 2004 amendment has made marriage something akin to the exclusive privileges enjoyed by white people during apartheid in South Africa. It demeans the notion that marriage is a loving, committed relationship and suggests that it is merely a biologically defined partnership, while suggesting that other loving, committed relationships are not eligible. The Marriage Equality Amendment Bill would rectify this unjust insult - an insult both to marriage and to the people it currently excludes.