

I find it disgraceful that Australia continues to allow this kind of discrimination to exist. Australia has historically been progressive and at the forefront of changes in social legislation. We have had a federal sex discrimination act since 1984, and it includes prohibitions against discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. And yet this very obvious example of government-sanctioned discrimination continues to exist. There is no defensible argument for saying that we as a country condemn discrimination on the basis of sexuality, and yet continuing to uphold a blatantly discriminatory law.

Marriage equality will happen in Australia, sooner or later. As someone who loves their country and wants to be proud of it, I want it to be sooner. I want to see Australia be at the forefront of this change, which in ten years time will seem as obvious and natural as the move to allow marriages between inter-racial couples does now. I don't want to feel ashamed of my country for clinging to an outdated and embarrassing law which it is forced to change due to overwhelming public indignation after every other Western country has long realised that marriage equality is an inevitability. Australia has a real chance to show that it is still a progressive country, dedicated to the equality of ALL its citizens.

Arguments about this issue should not be based on the suitability or otherwise of same-sex couples for marriage, as it is very obvious from divorce statistics that a large number of opposite-sex couples who marry are highly unsuitable for it. This is not a privilege that should be extended to same-sex couples if they can "prove" they "deserve" it. It is a right which should be extended to every Australian citizen, by virtue of the fact that we live in a democracy where every Australian is presumed to

be equal.

Having said that, it is also personally offensive to me that one of the most dedicated and loving couples I know, my best friend and her partner, are denied the chance to stand up in front of their friends and family and declare their love and commitment – and to have this declaration be officially recognised. It makes me very sad that this is happening in Australia, and makes me question whether or not I want to or should get married myself.