

To the members of the Australian Senate's Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee, I submit this rushed submission into your inquiry on Marriage Equality. I thank you in advance for your consideration of my views.

I am a Christian and ashamed of the way some of my brothers and sisters in Christ have promoted hatred of those who are not heterosexual. I use the words 'promote hatred' deliberately. One very recent example of this was the statements of a Christian Democratic candidate, Julie Hollett, in the recent by-election for the WA state electorate for Fremantle. Sounding reasonable, Hollett implies that the Greens are going to promote homosexuality to children in Western Australian schools. This is an exaggeration of the actual Green policy. Greens (WA) sexuality policy wants to remove the stigma of 'being gay'. As someone who was once or twice beaten up by fellow school students for 'being gay,' I am interested in establishing "community education programs that will lead to a greater understanding of sexual diversity." So were the good electors of Fremantle for they elected the Green's candidate.

I have spent nearly three decades examining issues like the acceptance of other sexuality's access to the right of marriage. My interest began in 1982, when I started to serve on the Baptist Union of Western Australia's Social Questions Committee. During my years as a member of that 'think tank', I became familiar with the arguments of what I called the Christian right. They are extremist political group that appropriate Christianity to justify their extreme right wing position arguing that their position is 'God's will'. I beg to differ.

In the twenty-first century, the Christian right have been sharpened with the modern techniques of political lobbying in the computer age. I believe that there has been a campaign to ensure your committee have hundreds of submissions opposing the proposed Marriage Equality Amendment Bill. Two examples are the Saltshakers and the morals campaigner Bill Muehlenberg's Quick Facts on Marriage. I believe it is your duty to ignore these submissions. They seek to deny access to marriage to non-heterosexual couples accepting antidemocratic views of the separation of church and state and the uncharitable view that God rejects people on the basis of their sexuality.

Before I begin, I am not so arrogant to claim that I speak for God. However, I am willing to say that I will defend my views by using the three sources of theological reflection: Scripture, Christian tradition and reason.

I firmly believe that God accepts non-heterosexual couples in exactly the same way God accepts heterosexuals. I would draw on both the inclusion of gentiles in the Church (Acts 10,11) and the argument of Christian liberty used by Paul in the middle of Romans. I would use the John Boswell's Christianity, Social Tolerance and Homosexuality: Gay People in Western Europe from the Beginning of the Christian era to the Fourteenth Century. (Boswell is not a relative of mine). Boswell argues that Christianity and the earliest Christian groups were not anti-'gay.' The eventual anti-'gay' stance of the Western church was imported from the wider society during the twelfth century. The reasons for this importation are unknown. However, they worked their way into the Biblical interpretation, corrupting our understanding of the Bible. I would also draw on the doctrines of God's grace and the Western Calvinist idea of humanity's sinfulness. The later is often seen as a negative but I see it as a positive. Everyone's actions and thought are corrupted (ie sinful). This includes everyone's sexuality whether 'gay' or

straight.

However, the role of Parliamentary legislation is not to define what proper Christianity is but to set rules to govern society. The Christian right seem to have adopted some variety of 'Dominionism'. Dominionism is the belief that society should be governed by the law codified in the Bible and not drawn from various ethical sources. It defines the secular as anti-Christian. It forgets that one of the groups lobbying for secular government was a group of Christians who rejected any connection between the Church and the state. They are much quieter but still predominate in protestant theology. During a recent webcast, the head of the United States based 'Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty', J. Brent Walker, said that "religious liberty is a universal gift from God and the separation of church and state is an indispensable constitutional principle that protects it". Having a law based on 'Biblical law' impedes religious liberty. Your duty is to pass laws that allow people to develop their religious and spiritual lives and reject ones that impede it. The Howard Liberal government's amendments to the marriage act were designed to reinforce previous bigotry by euthanize the denial to non-heterosexual couples access to the re-assurance of state sanctioned marriage. The ability to have the moral endorsement of marriage with its social obligations of fidelity was taken from a class defined by their sexuality. The denial has reinforced the promiscuity among the non-heterosexual community hence re-enforcing its health and spiritual problems.

The bill for the committee's consideration is an attempt to restore spiritual health to the non-heterosexual in our community. I urge you to support it.

Let me make some remarks about the provisions of the Bill.

Schedule I Item 2 – I would like an additional provision that ensures the dignity of the wedding service is maintained

Schedule 1 Item 6 – The amendment is fine if it is state that the consent is obtained by the legal guardians of the couple.

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