

Committee Secretary
Senate Legal and Constitutional Committee
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Australia

Submission to Inquiry into the Marriage Equality Amendment Bill 2009

In thinking of what to say in this submission, my first thought was that I should show how judicial and legislative processes concerning the issue of same-sex marriage have progressed in other countries (naturally those in California, U.S., come to mind). But then decided that the continuing struggles to gain equal marriage rights overseas should have little influence on Australian policies. Instead I wish only to express my views on the issue of same-sex marriage, as an Australian citizen and gay man.

Heterosexual couples take the opportunity to marry the partner they love as a right. A right which is not only not extended to gay couples, but also prohibited. Anti-discrimination laws expressly outline that discriminating on the basis of sexual-orientation (among other characteristics) is illegal, and to my thinking this is intended as a protection of rights to all people. Why does this not extend to marriage?

A major argument against same-sex marriage is that religious groups say that marriage is defined as a union between a man and a woman. However, in our society the act of marriage and religion are continually becoming separated. Marriage is an act of devotion to a loved partner, even among atheistic persons.

Lastly, I don't believe that the right of marriage to same-sex couples should be decided by the majority opinion of the population (or expressed opinions of parliamentarians, whether personal or that of their 'constituents'), one way or the other. Marriage equality should be granted as a right to all people. Equally.

Yours sincerely,

Michael Newham