

Dear Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee,
You will likely have received previous version of my submission to your inquiry into marriage equality through the Australian marriage equality organisation but I would like to add another point.

That is that the **real** cost to the Australian tax payer of not bringing gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex citizens up to the same level of Equality and Equity with every other Australian is not unlike the question of 'Incarceration' Vs. 'Rehabilitation' for convicted or remand prisoners which is debated across all States and territories currently.

People talk about the 'pink dollar'. Like those in same sex relationships have some privilege which exonerates them from the average couple's and family's financial imposts. Rubbish in reality.

The case is that if the Commonwealth Government fails to welcome same-sex couples into the fold of the average heterosexual 'married' couple by legislating equal rights, all that will happen is that this marginalised segment of the Australian community will remain marginalised and disadvantaged, [some what like the Indigenous population]; less likely to deal with their difference openly; less likely to be able to complete education because of harassment and bullying and thus pursue desired employment trains.

The "pink dollar is a fee.

The four times the suicide rate for gay men, the high rate of lesbians in prisons with habitual social problems, often victims of child abuse, and the academically recognised estimated 40% attempted suicide rate of Transgender people, [many of whom are same sex attracted as well, i.e. lesbian and homosexual], is the reality of these LGBTI communities.

And for little other reason than systemic ostracization, abuse, outcast, harassment and violence.

I know, I've been a counselor at this coal face for two decades and work with Queensland police to create the Police Liaison Officers to the LGBTI communities branch.

The real value of 'Marriage' to all Australians?

'Marriage' is not necessarily a 'church ceremony' in Australian society, especially since many, many Australians aren't 'religious' except about 'football, meat pies, kangaroos and Holden cars'.

The 30+% odd that are religious would have the rest of Australia believe that they invented and own 'marriage'.

But for most, I feel, it's the social event as much the bucks night, the hen's night, the wedding and bride's and bride's maids dresses, the photos, both families being together celebrating and the reception which are equally, if not more important than, walking down the aisle of some church they've rarely, if ever attended before.

The fact is therefore, in my reckoning, [having been a heterosexual male and doing the whole thing myself], that it is 'the institution' of 'marriage' that is in fact quite secular and the thing that is tantamount to Australian heterosexual couples. 'Marriage', psychologically sets up a bastion of a relationship; a given 'no go zone' for would be intruders and the potentially covetous. True it's not a fail-safe

but ...

for many Ozies, especially the secular, 'Marriage' in the Australian vernacular carries a special weight and currency which incontrovertibly describes the unity of the couple.

This is the 'Marriage' that, if denied to same-sex couples disallows the same equality of socially recognised sanctity of respect for their relationships as heterosexual married couples enjoy AND moreover the equal respect afforded to the children of 'married' relationships. (Not the sort of 'out-of-wedlock' type regarded children of some loosely affiliated couple be they heterosexual or same-sex couples who are denied Marriage.

"They're a couple you know", or, "that's his partner", and, "that's they're kids", simply doesn't carry the same validity as "They're married you know with 3 children"!

How often will you here same-sex couples feel the need to have to tack on to their conversation of "we're partners" with..... "for X-number of years", to try and give the equal legitimacy and a validity of their union as heterosexual married couples enjoy?

On the other hand "they're married" stands alone and says it all and rarely has to be justified with the descriptor of how many years the marriage has been in existence to give it true currency.

Likewise "we're partners" with "we had our Civil Union x-number of years ago" will never have the same unspoken 'hands-off' authority or legitimacy in Australian society as "They're married".

'Marriage' belongs to Australians through the Marriage Act as much as the through the Constitution.

'Marriage' does not belong to the Churches.

Marriage belongs to Australians.

Church ceremony belongs to the churches and they do not own, and ought not have anymore say, in either the Australian Constitution or the Marriage Act., than any other Australian.

The Australian Christian Lobby (ACL) has circulated a document titled '21 Reasons Why Marriage Matters'.

It absolutely does and for the full weight of the social reasons they list why it is so recognized and important across all Australian society, not just the non-secular.

It is for these and many other reasons as well then that to deny same-sex couples the same rights to 'Marriage' would be completely unjust, unfair, un-Australian and discriminatory.

Your sincerely,

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