I grew up in Canada and immigrated to Australia from Canada in 2006 to be with my partner. I didn't realise the huge impact that gay marriage would have on me until it was made legal in Canada. Having grown up in a religious household, I was taught that marriage was always the natural progression of a loving relationship. Being denied the right to marry because I was gay made me feel like I wasn't good enough or my relationships would never be acceptable. When the court decisions were handed down in BC and Ontario, and later the federal government amendments to the Civil Marriage Act one of the last remnants of discrimination had been removed. Although I had been proud of who I was and the society I lived in, it wasn't until marriage was legal that I truly felt accepted by the rest of society. The Government of Canada and Canadian society was now truly saying it is ok to be you and you deserve all the same rights as straight members of our society. This level of acceptance had a massive impact on me as a young gay man. I believe every person in Australia should have the right to feel accepted and included in society. By denying gay men and lesbians the right to marry, the Government of Australia is telling gay and lesbian Australians (and in particular young gay and lesbian Australians) that they aren't the same, their relationships aren't as valuable and that they don't deserve the same level of acceptance as straight Australians.

Having the Canadian experience to rely on, it is evident that the arguments against same sex civil marriage don't add up. Has the fact that gay men and lesbians are now allowed to marry somehow lessened the strength of traditional marriage? No. Has gay marriage caused a complete breakdown of society? No. Has gay marriage somehow led to fewer children living in loving and caring homes? Obviously not. Has gay marriage caused fewer heterosexual marriages or a huge spike in the number of divorces? No. Have any religious officials been forced to marry gay men or lesbians against their will? No. Has gay marriage resulted in greater incidence of incest? No. Each and every one of these arguments was used in attempts to deny gay and lesbian Canadians the right to equal marriage. Each and every one has also been proven false.

It is time for the Government of Australia to realise the discrimination based on sexuality is simply not appropriate. Allowing same sex marriage will give a strong message of inclusion and acceptance to young gay and lesbian Australians. Moreover, the arguments against same sex marriage can be refuted based on the experiences in Canada (along with Belgium, the Netherlands, Sweden, Norway, South Africa, Spain, and certain states in the USA).