

Parliament of Australia
Senate Committee Submissions
Legal and Constitutional Affairs
Marriage Equality

Submission by

Geoffrey Pfitzner

"I submit that equality in its essence means respect for the individual: whether you are black or white, male or female, straight or gay, have a certain disability or not, you are human and therefore enjoy certain unalienable rights. But in this respect equality also means respect for diversity: the basic reason we need to continue discussing and improving is because we are all different and equality is not something obvious. Only by cherishing our diversity, can we consider ourselves equal: this is the paradox of the word equality and the exact reason why we should all be equal at law.

As a student in the 1960's we considered the equality of George Orwell's society of 1984 " We are all equal, but some are more equal than others" we were told. In 2009, in our country of Australia we find that the reality of our society is a mirror image of the society of Orwell's Animal Farm.

As a gay man of 56 years I am old enough to have experienced the hurt and discrimination of a homophobic society which in some ways is behind us. I have memories of the jubilation of my peers as we celebrated our "legalisation" under the reformist Government of Don Dunstan in South Australia in the 70's.

I have been fortunate to have been able to live openly with my partner of some 25 years in a same sex relationship accepted by family and close friends. But it has taken significant courage to be open, and as recently as twelve months ago has subjected me to discrimination by a major employer resulting in unemployment.

The cold reality is that despite the promises of the Rudd Labour Government at the last election, same sex attracted Men and Women in Australia remain as second class citizens.

The enormous burden of acknowledging that one is attracted to the same sex remains a major factor in the deaths of many Men and Women in Australia. Whilst there remains any basis for discrimination at law in Australia, Legislators must accept that they contribute directly to the deaths of these Men and Women.

The following newspaper front page is but one example of the carnage caused by the death by suicide- this being that of a young gay man from the Geelong suburb of Highton. Within days of accepting and admitting his sexuality to his family, he made a decision that life was not worth continuing in his tormented state.

Until our laws, and then our society, accept that there is NO inequality which is acceptable, the torment for same sex attracted Men and Women will continue.

I call upon Members of the Senate, and all Members of the Parliament of Australia to take all action in their power to remove all inequality in our Legislation.

I urge the Senate to support changes to ensure Full Equality for all in Marriage Laws in Australia."

Geelong

Advertiser

Saturday 29 April 2009

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Photo: GEOFFREY PFITZNER

DEADLY HEAD-ON



Highton teenager James Boot was killed when his car and a truck carrying livestock collided. The truck, top, burst into flames after the impact.

Car photo: DARREN APPS



James Boot

KERRI-ANN HOBBS and REBECCA TUCKER

HIGHTON teenager James Boot, 19, was killed when his car and a sheep truck collided head-on at Mount Moriac late on Thursday night.

Witnesses have told how they watched a fireball erupt outside their Princes Highway homes as they rushed to see if

anyone had survived the horror crash.

The truck driver, who made a miraculous escape from the inferno, could do little to help the hundreds of sheep on his rig as he sheltered behind another vehicle until help arrived.

The family of Mr Boot, a former Belmont High School student, was last night too distraught to talk about its

loss but friends began leaving tributes on the teen's Facebook website.

"We love you and miss you," friends Chrystal and Arwina wrote on the social networking site.

"RIP mate ... u won't be forgotten," another friend, Brady, wrote.

Photographs on the popular teen's website showed a tightly-knit group of friends..

Earlier on Facebook, Mr Boot wrote that he loved everyone forever.

Mt Moriac residents Liz and Ron Corney, who heard the crash about 11pm, raced outside to see the flames coming from the truck. Mr Boot's blue Ford Laser was a mangled wreck.

Mrs Corney said the trapped sheep were bleating in panic as they sheltered

from the flames. "I just felt sorry for them," she said.

Nine hours after the late-night fatality, the Princes Highway remained shut for about 5kms between Hendy Main and Considines roads as the CFA and VicRoads worked to remove diesel from the road and take away tainted soil.

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