

Dear Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee,

This is my submission to your inquiry into marriage equality. I fully endorse the submission made by Australian Marriage Equality in favour of the Marriage Equality Amendment Bill 2009.

As I finish my time working in South Korea, I am beginning to think of where I should head to next. I would like to return to Australia, but I am finding myself asking 'why should I give my brain, my skills, my talent, and my taxes to a country that appears happy to view me as a second class citizen?' This is a question I know I'm not alone in asking. Australia used to be a country that was at the forefront of social issues, giving women the vote many years before other nations. What happened? How is it possible that in this day and age, a country so famously laid-back, known for its fair-go attitude, can continuously pander to a conservatism based on nothing but fear of change and fear of those different to the norm. It disgusts me that the country I call home can continue with this belief. How many other talented young men and women like myself will leave Australia for more tolerant shores before the Australian government realises it needs to change. Marriage equality is not a question of 'if' it is a question of 'when'. Australia is ready for it, why is the government so scared of making the advance??

This is an issue that crosses party lines. I grew up in a small country town, held onto by one of the oldest and longest serving conservative members in history (if not the longest). While I may have despised the man who 'apparently' represented me, he was (and continues to be) voted in by friends and family in the region. These friends who continuously vote in such a conservative member still support the idea of marriage equality. Parties should not be worried about losing votes because people are scared of change. The people are more accepting than you think.

I spent my time in school constantly telling myself that I am as good as everyone else. Indeed, telling everyone else that although I am different, I am no lesser. It frustrates me beyond belief that I still have to justify my feelings. That I still feel the need to constantly have to claim that I am just as good as anyone else.

We should not have to stand up to the government and say 'hey, we're different, yes, but that is no excuse for you to treat us different'. We should not have to point out that the Australian government is bullying some of its weakest citizens. We should not have to point to Canada, to South Africa, to Spain and beyond and say 'their society didn't turn into Sodom and Gomorrah'. We should not have to question our love and loyalty to our country of birth. We should not have to wonder if Australia is worthy of our taxes, our talent, us. We should not have to tell our parents that we are not coming home because our country doesn't love us. We should not have to hide our love. We, as citizens, as your employers, should not have to beg you to treat us with some respect.

We should not, in 2009, be having to write to you, asking for equality.