

It is with a great deal of sadness that I write this letter. I find it hard to believe that in 2009, with all the troubles in the world today that a minority group of Australians find themselves fighting for a basic human right – the right to marry. There are major issues going on out there in our world - severe financial unrest, corporate collapse, terrorist activity, poverty, child abuse, drug abuse, drug trafficking, unemployment, environmental destruction and the list goes on. So why, in a so called modern society that says it embraces all that is different in our multicultural Australia, is one group of people being discriminated against? I can't believe that this issue is still even being discussed. Consenting adult Australians should be able to marry whoever they wish – opposite sex or same sex, it is irrelevant. Why is religious fervor entering the discussion? Religious Australians are allowed to practice their religion freely & without discrimination. They can marry who they wish. All Australians should have the same rights!

I am the mother of a nineteen year old gay daughter. My daughter should have the same rights as her fellow straight Australians. She has been through enough in her young life. The last few years haven't been easy for her. Not only has she had to contend with teenage years and all the issues that comes with that, she has also had to search for her sexual identity in a society that tells her that she is less than her straight school mates. My beautiful daughter is a thinker. She is smart and kind and like many of her contemporaries she is not sure what she will do with her life yet but she is questioning whether there is a place for her in Australia. This is not right. Just because her sexual preference is outside the norm doesn't make her any better or worse than others, just different. Isn't that what we encourage in Australia. We are a multicultural society that is being shackled by very narrow interpretations of religious teachings. My daughter, and her mother, and her mother's mother were all born here in Australia. My daughter is entitled to the same rights as me and every other Australian. I want her to be free to marry whomever she chooses and for her future relationship to given the same recognition and respect as that of her straight counterparts

It's time for our leaders to do what they were put in power to do – LEAD! The law must allow same sex marriage. What the law allows, society will accept. To the best of my knowledge seven other nations allow same-sex couples to marry - Belgium, Canada, the Netherlands, Norway, South Africa, Spain and Sweden. A number of American states allow same-sex marriage as well including Massachusetts, Connecticut, Iowa, Vermont, Maine and New Hampshire. Australia needs to be associated with the forward thinking nations of the world, the nations that embrace human variances. Do you really want our talented young Aussies to have to leave our country just because they can't marry the person they fell in love with?

I believe that many of the world's problems have been born out of lack of respect. Respect of others views, beliefs & lifestyles. I am not suggesting that we adopt all others views & beliefs, just respect their right to have them. The law can no longer give credibility to the narrow minded of our community. The right to marry is a right that all Australians must have now, this cannot be put off any longer.

Please do not publish my name or contact details.