

Do you wish for your name to be withheld from publication?: Yes

Do you wish for this submission to be confidential?: No

Your submission:

I write to express my support for the Marriage Equality Amendment Bill 2009.

If both governments are saying that they support the repeal of anti-discrimination legislation against same-sex people and couples and in the same sentence say that the Marriage Act will remain as being only between a man and woman, they are STILL discriminating against same-sex attracted people and couples.

This is unfair, unjust and an imposition of the State's values on peoples individual private lives. The inability of same-sex attracted couples to marry serves only to continue homophobia.

People who are intolerant or uneducated about same-sex attraction and relationships feel vindicated in their homophobic views. They feel safe in the knowledge that its ok to be homophobic or derogatory towards same-sex attracted people because they would consider the government is saying the same thing by not legalising gay marriage.

Sure a lot of people in the Australian community are supportive of same-sex relationships and identified people but the homophobia still continues.

We hear homophobia in the general community spoken by teenagers and adults on buses and on the street when they use the term 'thats so gay' as a negative adjective. If racist language is not ok why is homophobic language accepted?

Prior to Australians being educated about race issues and multiculturalism, it was also ok to use derogatory language about people from Asian and Mediterranean cultures and Indigenous Australians. Very few Australians would now dare use derogatory language about these or any other ethnic groups.

Over time, Australians have been educated about race issues and multiculturalism and we now embrace it as an integral part of our National identity.

I find it interesting how parents and community leaders still consider it ok that their children or peers or they themselves think its acceptable to use derogatory language about same-sex attracted or transgender folk. It is NOT acceptable. Lesbian, gay and transgender people are someone's partner, mother, brother, sister, friend, carer, confidant. The use of language is a critical step towards change in attitudes.

Australian needs to broaden its definition of cultural diversity. Cultural diversity it not ONLY about race and ethnic issues, its about sexuality and gender issues.

We see homophobia at work through the pain or uncomfortability of people who are silenced at work for either not feeling safe to be out or not being able to talk about their partner or their gay culture life openly. This continuing silence of queer, lesbian and gay people and feeling the need to speak quietly or in secret about our lives that demonstrates insidious homophobia. Doesn't everyone have the right to feel comfortable to be themselves wherever

they go in life and whoever they're surrounded by? This is something non-gay people take for granted.

Not all people are protected in their job by anti-discrimination legislation. Still today people are experiencing discrimination at work for being same-sex attracted.

This manifests in the form of unwanted advances or interest from male colleagues or bosses towards lesbian women and gay men being ostracised from colleagues and unfair dismissal.

We can see homophobia in the media in the invisible representation of gay people, particularly lesbian women in the media. Often gay characters are the centre of intrigue, are gay men who are effeminate therefore reinforcing gay stereotypes or not represented at all.

There is not one gay focused Australian produced TV program. Imagine if there was not one program on Australian TV that heterosexual people could relate to as representative of their lifestyle?

Various Australian produced TV programs have attempted to address the issue of lesbian love only to have episodes edited heavily or withdrawn or be the subject of audience complaint.

My point is to illustrate that while everyone seems to think that Australia has come of age with respect to accepting gay, lesbian and transgender people - we have got a LONG LONG LONG way to go until we embed this acceptance across the whole of our community and into non-heterosexist thinking and into a basic awareness of lesbian, gay and queer culture and identity.

While I believe it is an individual couples right to choose to marry or remain in a de facto relationship or simply live together - ALL PEOPLE regardless of sexual orientation, race, religion, gender, intelligence, capability should be afforded the RIGHT TO CHOOSE to make this decision in their life.

Until the Marriage Act is amended to legally allow same-sex couples in Australia the right to marry, the homophobia (that I've merely touched on above) and marginalisation of highly talented and high tax-paying gay, lesbian and queer people will continue. This is simply unethical and unfair.

The broader impact of this on the Australian community is that lesbian, gay and queer folk will:

- * show their unacceptance of this policy at the elections
- * relocate to Overseas countries that have legalised gay marriage and Australia loses talent.

Does Australian want to be known as the Homophobic country?

Sincerely