

## **Submission to the Inquiry into the Marriage Equality Amendment Bill 2009**

While I can't claim to represent anyone but myself, I am keen to register my view regarding equality in marriage.

I am the father of two beautiful children who are too young to be labeled with a sexuality, but they are among the first people I think of when the issue of gay marriage is raised. If one or both of my children turn out to be gay, how will I - even talking to them as adults - possibly explain why it is that the government thinks that they should never be allowed to marry the person that they love?

The fact that homosexuals should be discriminated against in this way by the law seems an anachronism in the modern age. Apart from anything else, one would certainly hope to find that gender discrimination would have few apologists - yet our society presently tells the homosexual partners of men and women that they cannot marry on the basis of their gender every day. I hope that the senate committee and the representatives who ultimately vote upon its recommendations will also think about the signal that refusing to allow gay people to marry sends to young people who are coming to terms with their sexuality about whether society will accept them. I regret that I have seen the unfortunate outcome of young people being frightened that they will not be accepted because of who they are.

I would also like to address the idea that marriage is a religious institution. While I am proud of my job in the employ of a major Christian church organisation (for whom I do not claim to speak), marriage clearly does not belong to any particular faith or indeed to the realm of religion as a whole. Marriage has existed in every society for the entirety of recorded history, and while many religions have marriage ceremonies as a part of their services, more secular societies have also had marriage rites. In the modern world, we surely would not claim that Chinese people are not married if they do not marry in a religious ceremony, or that Australian heterosexual couples who marry in civil ceremonies are not married. I see no point in legally compelling churches to allow same-sex couples to marry within their walls, but I certainly see no reason why they should be able to prohibit the practice from wider society.

Homosexuality exists around the world, and the idea that in the 21st century, in a country like Australia, couples are denied the travel, insurance and other benefits of their heterosexual colleagues based purely because of their sex lives or the people they love is one which I hope that the Senate committee will recommend be rectified as soon as possible.

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