

First name: Melissa

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Do you wish for your name to be withheld from publication?: No

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.

Marriage tells society that a couple are family to each other in a conclusive way that a network of "partnership registry" entries does not.

Marriage also tells the married couple that they have made a lifelong commitment to be family to each other. In many cases during hard times a married couple will get counselling and work through their problems rather than just breaking up the way a boyfriend and girlfriend who are just living together might.

Same sex attracted people often lose family members. Parents and siblings are pressured by religious communities to disown us. Even those family members who stay around often become less close to us having been taught from childhood that God does not accept our behaviour and who we are.

This being the case we need each other as family, especially given the facts on the ground which are that we do make lives together, we do raise children, and we do live lives on this earth just as opposite sex attracted people do.

Having the law prevent us from officially celebrating our relationships with the same ceremony used by opposite sex couples, and making a statement that we are at best equivalent to a heterosexual de-facto couple has at least two negative effects.

Firstly, it tells society to treat us less seriously. Our bonds as couples are assumed to be less strong, to be taken less seriously, and to be up for debate.

Secondly, it tells the same things to ourselves. When we do not see our life partners not as husband or wife but as boyfriend or girlfriend, we are discouraged from working through difficult times and from sticking together for better or worse.

While Marriage often fails in these goals for opposite sex couples it also does often succeed. And surely, society wants to discourage the merry go round that is serial monogamy and help people to build strong commitments and make lives with each other.

Churches who believe that our marriages are not legitimate can of course be exempt from conducting ceremonies for us. But there are plenty of religious institutions that would be happy to celebrate our marriages if legally able to do so, and many more of us would be happy with a secular ceremony.

And even those of us who have not yet gotten married will be happier, safer, and more productive in a society that doesn't make a statement in its books of law saying that our prince or princess charming will never be as loving and committed as the one that a straight man or woman hopes for.