

The Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee,

Please find below my submission concerning the recently lodged Marriage Equality Amendment Bill 2009 by Senator Sarah Hanson-Young.

As I understand, this bill seeks to redefine marriage from its current and correct definition as "the union of a man and a woman to the exclusion of all others, voluntarily entered into for life" to "the union of two people, regardless of their sex, sexuality or gender identity, voluntarily entered into for life." These proposed changes are neither conscionable nor necessary and I most strongly disagree with any attempt to rewrite the legislation in this manner.

The first definition as currently in the Act is the correct definition for the following reasons:

1. Marriage is a God instituted and ordained union. The criteria for marriage and its definition are very clearly laid down in the Christian Bible.

Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. (*Genesis 2:24, Matthew 19:5, Mark 10:7, Ephesians 5:31*). "For as a young man marries a young woman, so shall your sons marry you, and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you". (*Isaiah 62:5*). "Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous." (*Hebrews 13:4*).

2. The Australian Constitution acknowledges the centrality of the Christian God in that the people of Australia who drafted it and agreed to its terms did so "humbly relying on the blessing of Almighty God" and sought advice and consent from both the political and Church leaders of the time. That the "Almighty God" referred to is the God of the Holy Bible is without question and, on this basis, for any law to have any real authority it must be in accord with the Bible. A redefinition of marriage as proposed is in direct contradiction with scripture and in effect unlawful.

3. The institution of marriage, as defined biblically, has been the cornerstone of strong societies for thousands of years. The family, built upon the stability of man and a woman lovingly committed to each other (to the exclusion of all others), has not only been the norm for the vast majority of peoples but is the longest standing institution and primary building block of society. From a purely pragmatic point of view it has served societies well in that it has been the foundational element in which balanced relationships are learnt and economic, educational, civic skills, etc are honed. Marriage as a foundational unit must not be redefined by political whim to make a political point for a tiny minority.

The reasons for not making the proposed changes are as follows:

1. Marriage already has a definition long held and clearly understood by all but an activist minority. In fact it was only because marriage started to come under attack from certain minority groups that the wording as it stands was written into law by the previous government in order to protect it. We cannot call red blue just because we don't like what it signifies and want to change its definition: it is still red. The proposed redefinition is not talking about marriage but something else entirely. We already have terms for these things such as relationship, partnership, etc. This attempt to change the language in effect sets out to destroy that which it claims to seek. Notably missing from the proposed redefinition is the

phrase, "to the exclusion of all others" indicating perhaps that marriage is not really that which is wanted by those seeking to redefine it. We should not seek to redefine such an important civic institution based on the will of those who do not appear to even support it.

2. There is absolutely no need to make this change. The arguments put forward relating to superannuation and benefits upon death hold no water as there is no legal bar to someone willing their wealth to another if they so choose no matter who (or what, in the case of pets as has happened) may be. Ironically, many homosexual couples appear to have found themselves worse off following recent government revisions to allow greater "equality" with respect to state benefits.

3. By redefining marriage as proposed, those who perform marriage ceremonies and hold deeply held religious convictions that marriage is only between a man and a woman are likely at some point to find themselves legally challenged should they refuse to "marry" a homosexual couple. The redefined act could compel the courts to rule against the celebrant and Australia will enter the situation where a minister of religion could be fined or jailed for exercising their right of conscience. This is not just possible but likely given the vehement opposition of religious institutions (particularly Christian, but other faiths are not immune) by certain elements of the homosexual lobby.

4. The Australian political system can only be diminished in stature and will ultimately undermine its own legitimacy if it allows any and every special interest group to redefine Acts of Parliament and laws in order to seek some benefit or attempt to legitimise its cause at the expense of others. The laws of Australia need to be for the benefit of the whole nation. This attempt to redefine a foundational part of Australian society is clearly not for the benefit of all but serves only to divide and cause strife.

I thank you for considering my submission.

Yours Faithfully

Phillip Twiss