

Senate Submission: Marriage Equality Amendment Bill 2010

Committee Secretary
Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee
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Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Australia

To Honourable Members of the Senate,

We write in regard your consideration of the Amending the Definition of Marriage Bills before you. Please accept our statement AGAINST any changes to the current definition. Our reasons are outlined below.

Focus on the Family's Position Statement on Same-Sex Marriage

Marriage is a sacred, legal, and social union ordained by God to be a life-long, sexually exclusive relationship between one man and one woman. Focus on the Family holds this institution in the highest esteem, and strongly opposes any legal sanction of marriage counterfeits, such as the legalisation of same-sex "marriage".

History, nature, social science, anthropology, religion, and theology all coalesce in vigorous support of marriage as it has always been understood: a life-long union of male and female for the purpose of creating stable families.

History and Marriage

Marriage is not a Western or modern invention. It has existed as an institution since the beginning of civilisation, and thus supersedes our modern laws. Every society at all times has viewed the social norm of marriage as a union of male and female.¹ Studies of previous civilisations reveal that when a society weakens the sexual ethic of marriage, it deteriorates and eventually disintegrates.²

In the Netherlands, a country very tolerant of homosexuality, studies show that homosexual men have a very difficult time committing to the ideal of marriage. Even though law allows "same-sex 'marriage'". A British medical journal reports "male homosexual relationships last on average 1.5 years, and homosexual men have an average of eight partners a year outside of their supposedly 'committed' relationships."¹³

Nature and Marriage

Even a casual observation of nature reveals the vital distinctions between male and female and the need that each has for the other. Gender distinctions are not simply an artificial social construct. Men and women are uniquely designed to complement each other physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Marriage is the means for melding the two sexes into a stronger and more complete whole. Thus while marriage has intrinsic value of its own, a primary purpose of marriage is procreation. Marriage is the best means for producing and raising a healthy and productive next

generation. Marriage is also the way societies protect women from predatory males and socialize men.

Society and Marriage

Marriage is not just a private affair, but is a means of creating public virtue in that it responsibly regulates human sexuality, brings a man and a woman together in a cooperative and mutually beneficial relationship, and provides mothers and fathers for children. Society benefits from supporting the vibrant institution of marriage. Professor Robert H. Combs, a behaviour scientist at University of California, Los Angeles, has published over 130 studies on marriage lists, among many other facts, the following empirical data:

- Men and women who marry enjoy better health than other relationship forms
- Alcoholism and problem drinking are less common
- Men and women who marry have the weakest relationship to the suicide rate
- Men and women who marry have the lowest morbidity rates
- Children benefit more from an intact marriage and suffer greatly without it.
- Intact marriages and families are less likely to lead to teenage pregnancies and divorce¹⁴

Children and Marriage

The optimal environment for raising a child is one in which the child's mother and father are married to each other. Deliberately depriving a child of a mother or a father is not in the child's best interest and is never compassionate. But this is what every same-sex family does for the sole purpose of fulfilling adult desire. On average, when compared with children raised by both parents, children deprived of mothers or fathers fare worse in virtually every measure of well-being.³ The sparse research regarding children raised in same-sex couple households reveals that such children are comparable in well-being to those in single-parent households.⁴ In addition, children raised by homosexuals are significantly more likely to develop a homosexual orientation themselves.⁵

Men and women are distinctly different. Each gender brings vitally important – and unique – elements to a child's development. Thousands of academic studies reveal that the presence of a father in the home increases children's cognitive and verbal skills, academic performance, involvement in or avoidance of high-risk behaviours and crime, and emotional and psychological health.⁶ Our hearts and a wealth of research tell us of the power and importance of the mother-child bond.⁷

Patrick Fagan, a leading international sociologist, wrote "the data clearly show that growing up in a traditional married family most often results in better health, longevity, happiness, higher levels of educational attainment, stronger work ethics, and more income and lifetime wealth, and also, to much lower levels of crime, drug addiction, out-of-wedlock births, abortion, divorce, school dropouts, joblessness, poverty, illness, suicide and depression"¹⁵

One simple way to summarize social science research insights gathered from studies of the last century is to say that children thrive in an intact marriage between a man and a woman, where there is commitment to each other and to the children.

Discrimination and Marriage

We elevate marriage in our laws over other relationships because marriage has proven over millennia to be an obvious societal good. Society provides benefits to natural marriage because natural marriage uniquely provides necessary benefits to society. Marriage law does not discriminate. Marriage is open to any two individuals provided they meet certain criteria regarding age and blood relationship, and provided the individuals are of the opposite sex. All are free to marry under this universal and age-old definition of marriage.

Homosexual activists seek not to end discrimination because laws do not preclude homosexuals from marrying. Rather, they seek to completely redefine – and thus undermine – the foundational institution of marriage. And no one has the right to do that. Indeed, some prominent gay activists have gone so far as to state this as their goal.⁸

This powerful, advantaged, vocal special interest group is seeking not to be left alone, not to be simply tolerated or even respected, but to force its views on the rest of society. They are asking each of us to radically change our understanding of marriage and family. And this new definition of marriage and family will be force-fed to our children at every grade level.

Studies show that when the a country's law sanctions homosexual relationships the "younger generation becomes confused about sexual identity and quickly lose its understanding of lifelong commitments, emotional bonding, sexual purity, the role of children in a family... Marriage is reduced to something of a partnership that provides attractive benefits and sexual convenience but cannot offer intimacy"¹⁶

Those who would redefine marriage often insist that the only necessary qualification for marriage is "love." Yet if one accepts that rationale, then there can logically be no boundaries as to what constitutes marriage; any combination or number of consenting individuals must ultimately gain the same legal and societal sanction as natural marriage. What about bisexuals? Won't they ask to marry members of both sexes at once? What about close family members? While love is vital, it is not the definitional element of marriage. We love many people we do not marry.

Religion and Marriage

The five major world religions, Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, and Judaism recognise and uphold the natural, heterosexual understanding of marriage. By contrast, these religions teach that homosexual behaviour is sinful or wrong.⁹

The Bible and Marriage

As a Christian organisation we believe that Marriage is the first institution ordained by God and has served from the beginning as the foundation for continuation of the human race. Genesis tells us that shortly after the creation of the first man, God acknowledged Adam's incompleteness. God then created Eve as Adam's partner, his completer, and blessed their union.¹⁰ Jesus underscored the importance and sacredness of marriage in His own teachings.¹¹

The apostle Paul taught that the marital relationship is to be an ongoing demonstration of the sacrificial love that Christ showed His church. In contrast, the Bible clearly proscribes any form of homosexual behaviour as sinful.¹² As such, it is not and cannot be the basis for a sacred marriage relationship.

In conclusion

Marriage is unquestionably good for individuals and society. It deserves respect and protection. Any efforts to redefine marriage destroy the institution – and ultimately – civil and healthy society. Thus we oppose any government recognition or endorsement of marriage counterfeits, including same-sex unions.

1 Suzanne G. Frayser, *Varieties of Sexual Experience: An Anthropological Perspective on Human Sexuality*, (New Haven, Conn: Human Relations Area Files Press, 1985); Edward Westermarck, *The History of Human Marriage*, Vol. 1-3, (New York: The Allerton Book Company, 1922); Helen E. Fischer, *Anatomy of Love: The Natural History of Monogamy, Adultery and Divorce*, (New York: W. W. Norton, 1992); George P. Murdock, *Social Structure*, (New York: Macmillan, 1949).

2 See J. D. Unwin, *Sexual Regulations and Human Behavior* (London: Williams & Norgate, 1933).

3 See, for example, Glenn T. Stanton, *Why Marriage Matters: Reasons to Believe in Marriage in Postmodern Society*, (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1997); David Popenoe, *Life Without Father: Compelling New Evidence That Fatherhood and Marriage are Indispensable for the Good of Children and Society*, (New York: The Free Press, 1996); D. A. Dawson, "Family Structure and Children's Health and Well-being," *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 53:573-584 (1991); Ronald P. Rohner and Robert A. Veneziano, "The Importance of Father Love: History and Contemporary Evidence," *Review of General Psychology* 5.4 (2001): 382-405.

4 Ellen C. Perrin, MD, "Technical Report: Coparent and Second-Parent Adoption by Same-Sex Parents," *Pediatrics*, Vol. 109 No. 2, (2002) p. 341. F. Tasker and S. Golombok, "Adults Raised as Children in Lesbian Families," *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 65:2: 203-215 (1995).

5 Judith Stacey and Timothy Biblarz, "(How) Does the Sexual Orientation of Parents Matter?" *American Sociological Review*, 66 (2001) 159-183.

6 See Glenn T. Stanton, *Why Marriage Matters: Reasons to Believe in Marriage in Postmodern Society*, (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1997); David Popenoe, *Life Without Father: Compelling New Evidence That Fatherhood and Marriage are Indispensable for the Good of Children and Society*, (New York: The Free Press, 1996); David Blankenhorn, *Fatherless America*. (New York: Basic Books, 1995). See also, Kyle D. Pruett, *Fatherhood*. (New York: Free Press, 2000).

7 See for example, B. Hunter, *The Power of Mother Love*. (Colorado Springs: Waterbrook Press, 1997).

8 See Michelangelo Signorile, "I DO, I DO, I DO, I DO, I DO," *OUT*, May 1996, p. 30; Stanley Kurtz, "Beyond Gay Marriage," *The Weekly Standard*, August 4-11, 2003, p. 26.

9 "Major World Religions on the Question of Marriage," Marriage Law Project, April 2000, at (<http://marriagelaw.cua.edu>).

10 Genesis 2:24.

11 Matthew 19:6.

12 Leviticus 20:13; Romans 1:18-32; I Corinthians 6:9-11.

13 Glenn Stanton and Pete Winn, "Is Marriage in Jeopardy?" Focus on the Family Social Research, Colorado Springs, Colorado, 2003, August 27.

14 Glenn Williams, "Why Marriage is Best!", Focus on the Family International, Colorado Springs, Colorado

15 Patrick Fagan, "Faith and Family: The Core Strengthens of American Society," Heritage Foundation, Washington D.C., 2000, July. 15.

16 See Dr. James Dobson, *Marriage Under Fire*, (Sisters, Oregon: Multnomah Publishing, 2004).