

## Personal submission into Marriage Equality 2012

I have presented an official submission on behalf of Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays in Australia as their National Spokesperson, but I would like to tell our family's personal story to this Inquiry.

Our family unit was ideal, with Mum at home with the children and Dad at work. We provided a loving home, with consistency, care and plenty of communication and input into our boys lives. I was the mother that brought the oranges, washed the football jerseys, did the sports rosters and was on the school committees.

Our eldest son James came out in 1995 at the age of 18years. Even though we as his parents initially struggled about what would happen to him as a gay man, he knew he was totally supported by family and friends.

James was a Prefect and well respected at school. He went straight to University to do a Social Justice Degree and then entered the Qld Police Service at the age of 20 years. James became the youngest Sergeant of Police in Qld at the age of 28 years. And, of course as his parents we were and are very proud of him. He was an "out and proud" young policeman dedicated to his job. We have always taught him "to never take a step back and never apologise for being gay, because he has done nothing wrong".

However, what is sad about his success is that he once told **me he feels he needs to work twice as hard as anyone else to be seen as half as good. He feels if he should ever fail, that society will see it due to the fact he is a gay man because he feels he is seen as inferior by the world. He feels he needs to overcome stereotypes.**

My straight son would never have the feeling he has to prove anything to anyone just to state he is a "man".

Fortunately, for James he doesn't suffer depression or have abuse problems, but he climbs mountains, scuba dive's internationally, treks in risky areas and puts himself into situations that most people would never consider just to prove to himself (and I guess the world) that he is a "man" and capable.

An example is, James while in Africa (doing 3 months voluntary work) came home to Australia with Black Water Fever (strain of Malaria) from living and working in such appalling conditions that most would never have accepted, but he did what he could to help the region.

James now works at the Sydney Opera House and is again achieving success quickly in a responsible, high profile position to once again prove he is capable.

By allowing my son the right to marry his partner Tom, if they should choose to take this step, would mean so much to him as an individual and us his family. I am sure James would feel more accepted by society and not feel he has to keep proving himself every day.

When James was in the police force, he was good enough to go into dangerous situations, where many straight men wouldn't dare, he was good enough to be in charge of the Watch House and keep guard over murderers, rapists and paedophiles who had the right to marry, but he couldn't. This is absolutely not fair.

James is a valued and equal member of our immediate and extended family. It isn't fair to us his parents that his relationship cannot be celebrated equally and legally the same as his brother's.

Marriage for same sex couples is working overseas without any detrimental effects to the churches or society generally and it can here. On behalf the Argent family I am calling on this Inquiry to move that marriage equality be legislated for as soon as possible.

Our son has done nothing wrong, he was born gay, he isn't a deviant, or immoral. He keeps the family values (like his brother) that we instilled into them as they grew into adulthood. In fact I recognised James was gay, long before he would have considered it himself.

Shelley Argent