

1 April 2012

To whom it may concern (and to those of you who have direct input into the discussions that will determine our future way of life),

I am writing out of concern regarding the proposed change to the definition of marriage.

I am a secondary school teacher who has had the privilege of studying the resilience of adolescents and their need for caring adults as they negotiate the ups and downs of life. This I did several years ago as part of a Master of Education at the University of Melbourne. A caring adult can be of any gender.

My concern regarding the changing definition of marriage lies in the fact that children need to know that there are things in life that are constant / consistent. The definition of marriage is the most obvious and easiest one to protect. Although a couple's marriage is no longer viewed by the majority in society as a forever deal, marriage itself is still seen to be so in the ideal world. This, combined with the knowledge that it is a specific type of unity between man and woman, enables our children to be sure of the relationship that their biological parents may have aspired to.

I am not suggesting that we take a backward step with regard to a man-man or woman- woman relationship. Legally, any two people who make a commitment to one another should not be devalued by the legal system. The acknowledgement of de facto relationships is important in the society that our children are a part of.

Marriage is a religious term. To have a government body alter it suggests to our children that nothing is definite. Everything is dispensable. This does not lead to children with an inner strength and certainty in life that allows them to develop their resilient characteristics.

The foundations of religions that value marriage are clear on its definitions and as such, people who believe in those values would surely not wish to alter its definition. And those that do want to alter its definition clearly do not understand its purpose.

Greater depth of discussion with those who are pushing for the change needs to take place. Is it a desire for a ceremonial celebration to mark the beginning of their union that they seek? If so, perhaps it is a new word and ceremony that is required.

So many kids today are already struggling with the issues that we as a society have surrounding the variety of relationships. To define new terms such as de facto has been a step in the right direction. To alter long-standing definitions that have existed long before our time (such as that of marriage) is a step backward.

Please accept my apologies for any 'waffle' that may have crept in to my outline above. It is something that concerns me particularly in relation to the students I deal with in my role as 'grief and loss' educator, maths and physics teacher as well as in my role as a parent of four young children. The opportunity to

influence discussions is significant and to miss the deadline for submission would have been very sad.

Thank you for taking the time to read my thoughts. I hope that they may give you another dimension to the discussions that have taken place or at least add weight to thoughts you have already come across.

Wishing you the best,