

Tabled 3/5 Imagine Baptist Church
LCA - Marriage Equality Amendment
Bill 2010

IMAGINE

Thursday 12 April 2012

To whom it may concern –

This is a brief statement of the position of Surry Hills Baptist Church on the Marriage Equality legislation currently before Parliament, for which our Minister, Mike Hercock, recently made statements of support, and regarding which we have received a number of inquiries.

Most succinctly, we believe that the sanctity of heterosexual marriage should be upheld within our Church as exclusive, AND we endorse the proposed changes to Australia's civil marriage legislation.

We uphold the Beliefs, Objects and Values of the Constitution of the Baptist Union of New South Wales, and consider our approach to issues involving homosexuality and the gay community to be Evangelical, missional and pastoral, in what we think is the best Evangelical tradition.

We regard the gay community in our 30% gay suburb as neighbours, friends and colleagues having as much dignity and worth as anybody else. We believe that our relations with the gay community should be characterised as much by love and mission as should our relations with anybody else.

We believe that Christian marriage is not the same thing as civil marriage, and that it cannot be defined by Parliament. The Australian government administers practical and legal aspects of marriage for couples of all faiths and none, and does not and should not impose a Christian understanding of marriage upon those couples. We therefore do not believe that Christian marriage can ever be dishonoured by civil marriage legislation.

We believe that Christian Theology and theological values should generally not be legislated for non-Christians. Legislation is no substitute for persuasion, conviction or conscience, and can be actively detrimental to the formation of genuine faith.

We are concerned that in their actions and statements the Christian Lobby has been more confrontational than missional in their approach to these questions, more combative than persuasive, and that for the majority of our community their actions have reinforced the perception that Christians look upon them, and their gay friends and family and neighbours, with ignorance and irrational prejudice.

We believe that the primary effect of the Marriage Equality legislation on the everyday life of our community will be to increase the stability of relationships and allow better access to public services. We believe its primary effect on Christian mission will be that it requires our churches to develop a much more compassionate, engaged and personal response to homosexuality and to the gay community than has thus far been seen. We believe that both of these effects will be positive.

We acknowledge the legitimacy of many of the concerns that we have read, and hope this statement has clarified some of what we are and are not saying. We have not intended to cause frustration or anxiety amongst our churches, but to get on with mission in our community. We hope to work together on many of the questions that this brings to light.

Nigel Chapman, Church Secretary

Mike Hercock, Senior Minister