

Committee Secretary
Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Australia

1 April 2012

Dear Committee

RE: Marriage Equality Amendment Bill 2010

I am writing in support of the Marriage Equality Amendment Bill 2010. I support the Bill because I believe all Australians have the right to have their relationship recognised equally in the eyes of the law and society. While recent legislative changes have given gay and lesbian relationships de facto status, denying gay and lesbian couples access to full marriage equality unjustly relegates their relationships to second-class status. There is no reason why two people who lawfully fulfill all other criteria for marriage should be denied access to it based on their lawful sexual attraction. To continue to do is inconsistent with other legislation, discriminatory and detrimental to the well-being of gays, lesbians and their families.

In the 21st century, it is unacceptable that the estimated 10% of the population who identify as same-sex attracted are denied access to a right freely enjoyed by opposite-sex attracted people. Those who claim that allowing same-sex couples to marry corrupts the definition of marriage, or endangers the welfare of children, grossly misunderstand the current state of marriage in modern society and the history of the institution itself. Marriage is an institution that has changed dramatically over the ages, and is presently a civil, non-religious matter in Australia, defined by the society that legislates it. Numerous surveys and research have demonstrated overwhelmingly that a large majority of Australians now support marriage equality, and slowly this support is being reflected by our elected representatives. Many same-sex couples also live in marriage-like domestic arrangements, yet the law prohibits them from formalising their relationship in the way that it allows couples of the opposite sex to.

The legislation contains provisions for religions or churches that do not wish to marry same sex couples the right to refuse to do so, and I support this. Similarly, churches and religions should not have any claim or ownership of marriage, legally or otherwise, and while they are entitled to express their opinions on this issue and conduct marriages in line with their beliefs, these should not be considered as important factors when reviewing this amendment, as they ignore the fact that marriage in Australia is a civil, non-religious act.

The law does not require married couples to bear children, or for children to only be cared for by married people, so there is no lawful or logical reason why marriage equality would have a harmful or even any affect on the wellbeing of children in Australia. Statements to this effect are in fact discriminatory to the many single people who raise children, children raised by couples who are not married, and married couples who cannot or choose not to have children. In fact, marriage equality would provide children of same-sex couples the benefit of a family environment that is fully recognised by the law.

As a gay man, I also have personal reasons as to why I support full marriage equality in Australia. I have been in a committed relationship with my partner for five years and would like to be able to formally commit to him in the company of our family and friends in the country of our citizenship and have that commitment recognised equally by the law of Australia, and wider Australian society.

I strongly urge you to support this legislative amendment that hurts no one yet benefits so many.

Yours faithfully

Mr Rudy Bell