

Dear Committee and Senators,

I write this submission in favour of the marriage equality Amendment Bill 2010, as an individual who has spent most of his adult life campaigning for marriage equality and understanding the arguments and needs of those who oppose the reform.

My interest for the issue goes back to my teenage years when, then Prime Minister Paul Keating said “Two men and a cocker spaniel do not make a family”. This quote had a huge impact on me as a young person struggling with his sexuality and wanting to one day grow and get married.

Indeed this kept “in the closet” for many years. It was when a growing number of countries around the world started to embrace the reform (Including Canada in 2003 and The Netherlands in 2001) that I realised you could be gay and be married. This encouragement from overseas is what gave me the confidence to come-out and the motivation to campaign for marriage equality.

As a member of Australian Marriage Equality for 6 years and National Convener for 3 years, I have valued the opportunity to meet with many people who oppose marriage equality and understand their side of the argument.

In my experience, the key factor that motivates opponents of equality for same-sex couples, is that opponents feel an institution that is close to their heart and/or their faith is under threat.

During my tenure with Australian Marriage Equality I have done my best to assure opponents that we come in peace, this campaign is not about changing the way a church views or practices marriage, it is about providing equal dignity, recognition, security, and protection to loving and committed same-sex couples.

As result of the concerns of some faith groups, I would recommend that an amendment be made to the bill to explicitly ensure that there is absolutely no obligation on any minister of religion to marry same-sex couples.

When Australia adopts this reform many will benefit in various ways. These are outlined in the attached fact-sheets for your review and consideration.

Thank you for taking the time to review my submission, as well as the other submissions both for and against this reform.

Yours truly,

Alex Greenwich

National Convener

Australian Marriage Equality