

GASP (Geelong Adolescent Sexuality Project) response to the Senate Enquiry on Equal Marriage

We are a group of GLBTIQ young people involved with GASP (Geelong Adolescent Sexuality Project) we are a social and support group and we meet weekly to discuss GLBTIQ news and events. We are also involved in GLBTIQ events and activities in the Geelong region and in Melbourne.

We see equal marriage, or indeed just marriage, as being somewhat of a hot topic at the moment and we wanted to have the opportunity to express our opinion. It is important to us as many of our group members would like to get married someday and we feel our rights are being denied. With 77% of Australians supporting same sex marriage, it should have been legalised long ago. The Australian government goes on about all of our social advancements but the truth is on this issue we are still living in the dark ages. We are suppose to be a democracy celebrating and supporting equality, but these values that we should be upholding are being neglected.

There seems to be increasingly wide support and acceptance for equal marriage as many members of the general public can understand that this is not just a “gay” issue, but a matter of equal human rights. This is a value and an ideal that Australians want to be upheld in our society and should be reflected in our laws and policy at all times. In recent years we have seen many changes to laws in Australia in relation to same sex couples, from the age of sexual consent, to the way that Centrelink views and records same sex relationships. It is time for this positive change to continue and include marriage laws in these reforms.

Some minorities seem to think that if gay people are allowed to get married it will cause a lot of problems in society, but we feel the opposite. Marriage laws are currently one of the final ways that the state is able to discriminate against people on the basis of sexuality. Removing this form of discrimination would have wide reaching positive social change as it would send a clear message to broader Australian society that homophobia is wrong and unacceptable.

Religion separated from the state long ago, and this has been the case with marriage for some time. Marriage currently is able to go ahead with or without involvement from religious bodies. The legally binding part of marriage is a contract between the two parties with approval from the state. Therefore, religious minorities should not be able to hold undue influence over the government's decision about equal marriage, for marriage and religion have been two separate issues for a long time now. Religious views shouldn't be used to deny honest people their rights.

You only have to put yourself in our shoes to feel how discriminatory the current law is, imagine being denied the right to marry the person you love and want to commit to for the rest of your life. We think everyone should have the right to get married if they want to. It's not going to cause any problems it's just fair.