

Committee Secretary
Senate Legal and Constitutional Committee
Parliament House Canberra ACT 2600

Monday, 19 March 2012

RE: Marriage Equality Amendment Bill 2010

Dear Committee Members,

I would like to express my belief in the right of **two consenting adults** to make a lifetime commitment to each other.

In a world filled with violence, I just can't understand why those with religious beliefs are spending so much time and energy vilifying and abusing people with sexual orientations and gender identities different from their own.

Every day people in this world are murdered because they are black, Asian, Jewish, fat, disabled, Muslim, poor are any other thing that makes them different from 'the crowd'.

Where is the empathy that is so strongly embedded into the scriptures these people are citing?

Let me be clear, I am not a Christian; my faith is as a Buddhist. I have, however, studied Christian scripture along with that of Islam, Judaism and many other faiths. I just cannot rationalise how a text that condemns so many aspects of our daily life (that we consider utterly normal and acceptable) can be used as the basis for an argument against marriage equality.

If those groups believe that scripture should form the basis for our social rules then equal applications should be given to all aspects of it.

- When are we to implement a ban on the consumptions of shellfish? Leviticus 11:9-12
- Selling ones children into slavery is considered acceptable, when will the slave markets open? Exodus 21:7
- Working on the Sabbath is punishable by death, will we be stoning or hanging the offenders? Exodus 35:2
- Trimming of hair and shaving is very clearly condemned, what are we to do with those pesky hairdressers? Leviticus 19:27
- Mixed thread garments are an abomination, when are we to close fashion industry? Leviticus 19:19
- The whole banking industry is flouting the scripture by demanding interest on the loan of money, when will the legislation for interest free loans be implemented? That's a reform I could get behind. Deuteronomy 23:20

Can we seriously accept these arguments in a modern, secular society?

I feel saddened that loving relationships should be dragged through this shameful and vicious debate.

Empathy is a tremendously powerful way of understanding the position of others. To those married couples opposing marriage equality, I say look at your partner, consider the happy times you've had, the memories you've created together. Visualise your wedding day, how you felt making that public commitment to the person you love. Think about the comments your friends and family made, how good it felt and hopefully how good it still feels. A gentle touch on your shoulder, a peck on the cheek before leaving for work. Close your eyes, remember it, visualise it, feel it.

Now imagine being denied this because you are attracted to the 'wrong' gender. How does it feel in your heart?

If we strip away the religion, the 'tradition', the hysteria about the destruction of society, all that's left is ill informed hate and mean spiritedness.

If a currently married couple's union is so fragile that it will be degraded or destroyed by two men or two women marrying, I think they have bigger issues than my right to marry.

If you take away the hate, then what is left to argue against marriage equality? The world isn't going to end, society won't crumble, and the financial system won't collapse. Some lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people will have wedding ceremonies. They'll do so with people they love and their families. The people opposed to same sex marriage won't be invited or forced by the State to observe. Ministers of the faith aren't going to be asked to marry same sex couples if they oppose it, though some may choose to do so as a result of their own beliefs.

Love is love when expressed between consenting adults. It doesn't open the door to human animal marriage (animals can't consent) and it is certainly not an argument for polygamy or incestuous marriage. These are just convenient smoke screens presented by groups who know, in their heart, that the battle they are fighting is not based on anything other than hate for people who are different to themselves.

More love, less hate. If we practice loving kindness we see that at our core, all humans want to be happy, we all want to be free from suffering and we all want to have recognition of our worth.

I appreciate your taking the time to read this and hope that you can get in touch with your heart. I really hope that one day I get to marry the person I love, please don't maintain these cruel and unnecessary restrictions.

May you be well, may you be happy, may you be free from suffering.

Martin Feckie