

Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee
Marriage Equality Inquiry*
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Ladies and Gentlemen

I write in support of all Australians, regardless of sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression, to be able to marry the person of their choice.

Equality is not divisible. While one class of persons may not marry their partner of choice, they are placed in a second-class category.

There is no justification for denying freely-consenting adult Australians this right.

A number of invalid and even frankly fraudulent arguments have been raised by opponents of marriage equality: I beg the enquiry to study carefully the material here presented and not take those arguments at face value.

Promiscuity, short lives , ill health

Gay men, in particular, are frequently cited as being 'too promiscuous' to be allowed to marry or parent. Numerous allegedly scientific studies have been adduced in support of this contention.

All young people regardless of orientation have busy sex lives, but tend to settle down as they get older. My partner and I have been together for 20 years this year. We have friends who have been together for 30, 40, and even 50 years.

If people wish to reduce promiscuity and promote fidelity, marriage is specifically designed for this purpose, so why oppose it?

The studies which have been used to support the contention that all gay men are wildly promiscuous have been distorted, taken out of context, or in some cases (such as those emanating from Paul Cameron of the **Family Research Council**), have been shown to be fraudulent.

For detailed debunking of some of the main claims used by the Australian Christian Lobby, the Australian Family Association and others, many of which are taken from one specific Dutch study, I refer you to the Box Turtle Bulletin, which has done some excellent research in this area.

<http://www.boxturtlebulletin.com/Articles/000,003.htm>

The Family Research Council, whose 'research' is often quoted in support of these contentions, despite its grand title, is a one man band run by Paul Cameron.

"As FRI's chairman, Cameron has written papers associating homosexuality with perpetration of [child sexual abuse](#) and reduced [life expectancy](#).

In 1983, the [American Psychological Association](#) expelled Cameron for non-cooperation with an ethics investigation Position statements issued by the [American Sociological Association](#) and [Canadian Psychological Association](#) have accused Cameron of misrepresenting social science research." Wikipedia

Cameron is also the source of the myth that gays and lesbians die young: he reached this conclusion based on his studies of obituaries in gay newspapers. His methodology has since been shown to be grossly incompetent and his conclusions invalid.

Much of his work – and that of other anti-gay ‘scientists’ often quoted by various Christian lobbyists – is published only in one ‘scientific’ journal – **Psychological Reports**.

The Boston Globe has exposed this as a vanity publication, where authors pay to have their papers published, with a ‘non-standard peer review process’. It accepts papers rejected by journals run according to proper scientific standards.

Evidence drawn from the Family Research Council can and should be disregarded.

Another favoured source is the **American College Of Paediatricians** (membership unknown but thought to be between 60 – 400), not to be confused with the American **Academy of Paediatrics** (membership 60,000).

When the Academy reached a well-researched and scientifically based conclusion that gay parenting is just as good as straight), a tiny breakaway group who preferred their unsupported religious prejudices to scientific fact broke away to form the College.

The College has taken published research, cherry-picked and distorted conclusions, and falsified data to suit their agenda. Numerous respected paediatricians have demanded the ACP cease to cite their work in consequence. They are not a valid, reputable or reliable source of evidence, yet the religious lobby quotes them constantly. Their evidence should also be disregarded.

Child molesters

I should hope that every member of this enquiry is very well aware that the myth of gays as child molesters has been comprehensively disproved and debunked.

For those in any doubt may I recommend the following comprehensive survey of the literature

http://psychology.ucdavis.edu/rainbow/html/facts_molestation.html

And being molested as a child does not make one gay: The American Psychiatric Association stated in its May 2000 website fact sheet "Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Issues":

"[N]o specific psychosocial or family dynamic cause for homosexuality has been identified, including histories of childhood sexual abuse.

Sexual abuse does not appear to be more prevalent in children who grow up to identify as gay, lesbian, or bisexual, than in children who identify as heterosexual."

Helen W. Wilson, PhD, Assistant Professor of Psychology at Rosalind Franklin University of Medicine and Science, and Cathy Spatz Widom, PhD, Professor of Criminal Justice and Psychology at John Jay College of Criminal Justice at The City University of New York (CUNY), Jan. 7, 2009 *Archives of Sexual Behaviour*, "Does Physical Abuse, Sexual Abuse, or Neglect in Childhood Increase the Likelihood of Same-sex Sexual Relationships and Cohabitation? A Prospective 30-year Follow-up":

"Findings from this investigation provide tentative support for a relationship between childhood sexual abuse and same sex sexual relationships, but this relationship appeared only for men.

However, the data available in this study did not provide information about when same-sex sexual attractions first emerged and whether this predated or followed the sexual abuse. We also do not know what characteristics associated with the abuse (e.g., frequency, intensity, duration) might account for the relationship with adult sexual partnerships. It is also important to note that very few participants reported exclusively same-sex sexual relationships. Thus, it is possible that childhood sexual abuse increased the likelihood that men would experiment with both same - and opposite - sex partners...

While this prospective evidence linking childhood sexual abuse to same-sex sexual partnerships in men suggests an increased likelihood, these findings do not suggest that same-sex sexual orientation is caused by child abuse."

A lifestyle choice – the dangerous myth of ‘reparative therapy’

The notion that gays and lesbians can be re-oriented towards heterosexuality has been repeatedly exposed as a complete myth and a money-making scam for the organisations that practice it.

The principal advocates of this tend to rely on the aforementioned junk science to buttress their claims, e.g., NARTH.

Because of the very high numbers of ex-gays who have now come forward and admitted they were gay and all attempts to change them were profoundly disabling and damaging, this movement is in decline in the USA, but is still flourishing here, e.g., Margaret Court Ministries, Living Waters etc.

I do not propose to waste time rehashing the overwhelming number of exposes of this particularly cruel scam, but some useful references for the enquiry to study are as follows:

<http://www.boxturtlebulletin.com/repeat-after-me-the-reparative-therapy-echo-chamber>

<http://www.baywindows.com/ex-gay-movement-exposed-66670>

<http://gaynewsnetwork.com.au/news/northern-territory/4334-ex-gay-movement-in-decline.html>

Why change the law to accommodate only 1-2% of the population

"It is very difficult to calculate even the approximate number of [gay](#) people. Even when estimating roughly how many people are gay in any place, the following points have to be kept in mind:

- How many people we estimate are [homosexual](#) depends on how we define homosexuality.
- Many more people experience sexual feelings for someone of the same sex than report recent sexual experience with someone of the same sex.
- Because homosexuality is stigmatised it is more likely to be under than over reported."

(<http://www.avert.org/gay-people.htm>)

Very large surveys in the UK have come up with figures ranging from 1.5% to 6%, depending on the definition and methodology used <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/sep/23/gay-bisexual-population-uk>

“The class of people with same-sex desires may be larger than the class of people who act on those desires, which in turn may be larger than the class of people who self-identify as gay/lesbian/bisexual,” Wikipedia

The 1.5% figure refers to those who are happy to have their sexuality publicly known. This is therefore a considerable underestimate of the true numbers

If we include those who do not acknowledge or act on their homosexual desires, those who refuse the label, and those who outright lie about their true orientation, for privacy reasons, or out of fear, then the best currently available figure is between 4-6%.

Buttressing this contention it should be noted that numerous surveys have shown that a) the proportion of people self-identifying as gay has risen as the social climate has become more accepting and b) mirroring the prejudices of their generations, percentages self identifying as gay are higher in young age brackets and lower in older ones.

Whilst the available statistics underestimate the percentage of gays and lesbians, for the reasons noted, they greatly exaggerate the percentage of Christians in the population. Many claim the label despite never having set foot in a church since they were baptised, except for a family funeral or marriage.

And even then they do not necessarily agree with their spokespersons: polls have consistently shown for some time that Roman Catholics are largely in favour of equal marriage despite what the Pope and Cardinals say <http://blogs.reuters.com/faithworld/2011/03/22/survey-catholics/>

In any event, the acceptance of our equality and the celebration of our lives, our inclusion into society, should not depend on how many or how few we are, but on our intrinsic humanity.

Gays and lesbians have higher rates of mental illness

Quite what this has to do with equal marriage is not at first apparent. However, numerous studies have shown that the higher the level of social acceptance of gays and lesbians, the lower the incidence of poor mental health.

The Safe School Coalition Victoria <http://www.safeschoolscoalitionvictoria.org.au/about> has found that implementing their anti-homophobic bullying program in schools improves the mental health of all students, not just gays and lesbians.

The National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre (NDARC) has called on the government to legalise equal marriage to help reduce substance abuse in the gay community <http://www.starobserver.com.au/news/australia-news/new-south-wales-news/2012/02/10/marriage-good-for-mental-health/71464>

Psychology Today reports that “[Psychiatric](#) Disorders, defined by the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders IV, increased significantly among LGB respondents living in states

that banned gay marriage . . . there was more than a doubling in anxiety disorders among LGB people in states that passed anti-gay marriage laws. The scientists were able to rule out . . . alternative explanations for the pattern besides the direct effect of gay marriage bans on mental health. “ <http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/the-sexual-continuum/201003/new-study-suggests-bans-gay-marriage-hurt-mental-health-lgb-people>

In other words, poorer mental health outcomes, higher rates of substance abuse, and higher rates of self-harm in the LGBTI community is not inherently due to our sexuality, but to the stigmatisation and marginalisation of our community.

The largest symbol of this is the barrier that prevents our relationships being accepted, honoured and celebrated publicly exactly as heterosexual ones are.

Religion and Tradition

Many religious groups campaign vociferously against our full acceptance in society. However, Australia is not, and never was, a Christian nation. In the first instance, it was a British open-air prison. From the beginning it has comprised numerous races and religions, never more so than now.

To argue that the beliefs and traditions of the Christian churches should rule over all of us is in any event ridiculous.

It is the same argument that says because there are lots of Muslims living here, some regions and organisations should be exempt from state and national law, and be governed according to sharia law instead.

To maintain unity and cohesion in a diverse country, secular law must and will always take precedence over religious law: the legal code must be fair to those of all religions and those who profess none.

Groups cannot expect special rights, subsidies, exemptions and privileges on the basis of their membership of a religion.

People cannot be allowed exemptions from the law of the land, especially while drawing income from the government of that land: they must abide fully by its laws.

The law is the law and must be applied equally to all. To do otherwise would go against the fundamental Australian concept of a fair go for all.

And in the end, that's all gays, lesbians, bisexuals, transgenders and intersex are asking for, in all aspects of Australian life – equal treatment and a fair go.

CONCLUSION

May I thank you for your time: I sincerely hope you will take the time to study the issue in the depth it deserves and come to your conclusions based, not on party politics or personal or religious prejudices, but on the facts.

And the principal fact is the LGBTI citizens are not treated fairly or equally in this country, and one of the biggest inequalities is the denial of the right to marry.

Thank you.

Doug Pollard is a veteran gay journalist and activist who has been writing, broadcasting and campaigning since the early 1970's, and hopes to marry his partner this year in Australia in celebration of their 20th anniversary.