

To the Chairperson of the Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs □ Re: Marriage Equality Bill □

6 March 2012

Dear Senator, □

I write to express my support for the Marriage Equality Bill currently before the Senate. I write this submission as an update to the submission I made previously on this matter.

The bill is a step forward towards full recognition of the equality of same sex relationships with heterosexual relationships and removes a scar left by the Howard Government on human rights in Australia.

I hold this view for a number of reasons. □

- The Australian Psychological Society (2011) has found that “...decades of psychological research provides the evidence linking marriage to mental health benefits, and highlighting the harm to individuals’ mental health of social exclusion. The APS supports the full recognition of same-sex relationships, on the basis of this evidence.”
- Stable monogamous relationships between couples provide societies with significant benefits and should be recognised and encouraged, whether or not the members of the relationship are of the opposite sex or the same sex. Married couples provide each other with support when they are sick, care when they are infirm and improve the health and wellbeing of each other. ACOSS (2011) has found that while 25% of single people with no children are currently experiencing poverty, only 7% of people who are members of a couple do. Similarly, while 47% of single people over 65 are experiencing poverty, only 18% of people who are members of a couple do. The state should encourage couples to marry as a means of recognising the stability and benefits to society that that marriage brings.
- The right to marry and found a family is a fundamental human right. It is sad that this right should only be extended to some stable monogamous relationships among adults but not others
- People with strong religious convictions that marriage should only be between a man and a woman will not be required to marry a same sex partner with the passage of this bill. I support provisions of the Bill that will allow a celebrant who is a minister of religion to refuse to marry same-sex partners.
- Civil unions, while a step forward, are a second rate solution that entrench the discrimination that same sex couples suffer. I also disagree that defacto status is sufficient – if it is a marriage in fact, why not a marriage at law?

The majority of Australians (based on opinion polling) support marriage equality. Everyone I speak to supports this change – even those who are Christians.

I had the privilege of marrying my partner in California in 2008. It was the happiest day of my life. We love and care for each other very much, make each other happier and healthier and will, no doubt, over time, contribute more to society together than we do individually. We would have much preferred to marry here in Brisbane, and look forward to the day when everyone in a stable, monogamous adult relationship has that right. Passing this law means that our country will finally recognize our relationship.

Yours sincerely,

John Mikelsons