

March 20, 2012

### **Regarding: Marriage Equality Amendment Bill 2010**

I would like to express my concern at the proposal to amend the Marriage Act to no longer be exclusively between a man and a woman. I strongly oppose the amendment for a number of reasons, and am decided upon voting against any political party who might consider implementing this change in the future.

Marriage has always been between a man and a woman, not only in predominantly Anglo-Western society, but all over the world. The cultural and religious backgrounds of the majority of Australians maintain that marriage is between a man and a woman. I believe it is culturally and religiously insensitive and blindly inconsiderate of our increasingly multicultural population.

My background is in educational psychology and I work closely with children of primary school age. Current research shows that the most significant role models for children are their parents. An amendment to the marriage act, and same-sex couples consequently choosing to raise children, would have drastic implications for childrens' schema regarding sex and gender, which may in turn have implications for the mental health of such children.

How do married same-sex couples propose to conceive if they decide to have children? Will they pursue IVF? Will lesbian couples chose one partner to conceive naturally with a 'donor' of sorts? Would the father 'donor' be involved in the child's life, so the child essentially has two mums and a dad? Or would they omit the existence of this 'donor' entirely, unleashing a barrage of questions and confusion when the child is old enough to realize that babies are conceived with sperm and an egg? How do a gay couple 'conceive'? What are the developmental necessities in terms of the infant bonding, the health benefits of breast feeding, etc? I am utterly horrified at the potential mental health implications and abuse of human rights for future generations of children 'born' to same-sex couples. I am convinced, and my opinion allied with the Charter of Human Rights, that a mother and father provide the optimal environment for children to grow and be nurtured.

If discrimination is the key argument in favour of ammending the Marriage Act, this is preposterous. Many changes and ammendments have already recognised that same-sex relationships are a legitimate reality in our society and accommodate this form of relationship. Marriage is innately between a man and women. It can not be regarded as discriminatory to deny same-sex couples the right to marry. As cohabiters in a committed relationship, they carry legal recognition in the same way that a heterosexual de-facto couple do.

Marriage is fundamentally steeped in religious tradition. It is these same religions that forbid homosexuality. What percentage of homosexual couples ascribe to any one of these religions that they would feel the need to marry, as understood in these religious contexts? Why take on a construct of a religious order that so blatantly forbids relationships of this nature? Permitting the suggested amendment to the Marriage act will be a 'slap in the face' of religious groups across our country, as what they hold sacred is desecrated.

I refuse to allow a small pocket of society to invalidate and redefine marriage, which has existed in its current form for thousands of years. There are too many negative implications and 'unknowns' about the future of our nation's children in the event this amendment is passed. It is both culturally and religiously insensitive to redefine marriage. Our government is responsible for making the best decision for the future of our wonderful country, and in this case, that is to leave the Marriage Act unaltered.