

To the Senate Inquiry on *The matter of a popular vote, in the form of a plebiscite or referendum, on the matter of marriage in Australia*:

I am a gay Australian (albeit one living in the UK) and so am naturally a supporter of marriage equality. I would prefer the matter dealt with by parliament as soon as possible, as I don't think that the rights of a minority should be determined by the will of the majority in a public vote. There is no good reason why ANY Australian should be prevented from marrying the person they love, if both are of the age of consent and able to make the decision to marry of their own free will. I also believe that a public vote will lead to an extremely hurtful and offensive campaign demonising LGBT Australians, as we have seen in other countries where public votes have taken place (such as Ireland and in the USA). Although the pro-marriage equality sides in these votes were ultimately successful, the campaigns waged by those opposed to marriage equality were extremely hurtful and offensive to LGBT people and their families, and had the potential to cause mental harm to young LGBT people in particular.

But if there is to be a public vote on the issue I would like to see a plebiscite held at the next election to minimise delay and expense. I want the question and the process to be fair and balanced so they should have cross-party support and should not be set by the government alone. I do not trust the current Coalition government, so entrenched in its opposition to marriage equality, to set a fair and balanced question by itself.

A constitutional referendum is not necessary because the High Court has already decided the federal parliament has the power to enact marriage equality. This would be a waste of time and money. Federal parliament changed the constitutional definition of marriage in 2004 (with cross-party support), and they can do so again now.

I now live in a country (the UK) in which marriage equality is the law. I cannot explain how wonderful - and at the same time, normal - it feels to know that I am accepted and treated as anyone else. I wish that were the case in the country in which I was born, and in which my family still lives. I hope that if I one day marry in the UK, that I can take my husband back to Australia to meet my family and still be able to call him my husband.

Thank you for your time.

Tyrone Curtis