

The purpose of marriage is primarily to foster the conditions most amenable to raising happy and well-adjusted children. Stable male-female marriages provide the environment in which children are most likely to thrive. Any change to current marriage law is a threat to the stability of Australia. As a member of Australia's parliament I urge you to act in the interests of Australia's children and its future.

Before considering any proposal to legalise marriage of homosexual couples, I urge you to consider the following facts. They demonstrate that there is no equivalence between heterosexual and homosexual unions.

According to the 2003 'Sex in Australia' survey (20,000 people), conducted by Latrobe University's Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health & Society (Australian & NZ Journal of Public Health, Vol 27 No 2 2003), only 1.2% of adults identify as homosexual or lesbian.

According to the 2001 census same sex couples make up a mere 0.46 % of all couples in Australia.

Why is it proposed that such sweeping changes to such an important social institution be enacted for such a small sector of the population with so little evidence of demand?

Marriage of homosexuals has been legal in in The Netherlands since 2001. However, demand for such marriages is not great as in 2002 fewer than 1,000 marriages were performed between two men with a lower number again for marriages of two women. A study published in *AIDS* magazine, found that the average length of a relationship between two men is 1.5 years. In addition the study found that they have eight other 'partners' each year. (Maria Xiridou, et al, "The Contribution of Steady and Casual Partnerships to the Incidence of HIV Infection among Homosexual Men in Amsterdam," *AIDS* 17 (2003): 1031.) If this trend is

representative, it means that homosexual marriage means something quite different from what most understand heterosexual marriage to mean, that is a relationship exclusive of all others.

Evidence from Scandinavian countries, where same-sex 'civil union' type relationships have existed for over 10 years, indicates that male-male union breakdown is 50% higher than heterosexual unions. For female-female unions the breakdown figure is 170% higher.

Please act on behalf of what is best for the national interest and not on behalf of a tiny, but vocal, minority. Act to preserve marriage as it is currently defined in law.