



PFLAG Perth Inc.
P.O Box 524
Mirrabooka WA 6941

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Senator David Fawcett
Select Committee on the Exposure Draft of the Marriage Amendment (Same-Sex Marriage) Bill
Department of the Senate
PO Box 6100
Canberra ACT 2600

samesex.marriage.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Senators

Thank you for this additional opportunity to provide some clarifying information for the Irish Marriage Equality referendum. Further to the hearing held in Sydney on Tuesday, 24 January I would like to submit statistics taken from Irish and Australian government websites.

The senator is correct in stating that voting in Ireland is non-compulsory, this is the case for general elections, referendums and plebiscites held in that country. To dismiss the outcome as unrepresentative of the views of the entire population on the basis that Ireland does not have compulsory voting, would be to delegitimise the entire electoral system in that country.

There have been a total of 32 referendums held in Ireland since 1937 (when the current Constitution was enacted), 23 have been approved and 9 have been rejected. Voter turnout is recorded for each and the 2015 marriage equality referendum with 60.52%, ranks in the top five for numbers of the population casting their ballot. The average turnout at referendum elections in Ireland is just above 50%, which means that half the eligible electorate often choose not to engage in referendum decisions.

As was mentioned during the hearing, 92.3% of Irish people professed adhering to a religion at the last census, 90.44% of those were practising Christians. Australia by comparison, as stated by the ABS:-

61.1% identifying as Christian,
7.2% non-Christian and
22.3% stating No Religion
9.4% not stated

As we have seen by the existence of this inquiry, the proposal of same sex marriage in Australia has been largely opposed by those citing religious protections. The fact that Ireland voted 62% in favour

of marriage equality while having a much larger proportion of that population adhering to a religion, proves that being religious is not a barrier to approval of same-sex marriage.

Yours sincerely

Michele Davis
Vice President
PFLAG Perth.