

Additional Comments by Senator Ian Macdonald

This inquiry by the Legal and Constitutional Affairs References Committee effectively into the terms of the *Marriage Equality Plebiscite Bill 2015* continues the farcical situation into which the whole Senate Committee system is being taken.

Blatantly political inquiries are being established by the Labor, Greens, and Green Independents in the Senate that have little significance in public policy areas and which, for no practical or useful parliamentary outcome, engage the time of Senators and Committee Staff in inquiries for which the outcome is predetermined.

To make matters worse, again the element of this inquiry which was legitimate, and that is an inquiry to a Private Members Bill, the *Marriage Equality Plebiscite Bill 2015* should have been referred to the Committee set up to deal with inquiries into legislation, that is the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Legislation Committee.

This abuse of process of the Senate is bringing the whole Senate Committee system into disrepute.

Furthermore the majority decided that an urgent result was required to be tabled in the parliament notwithstanding that there is no likelihood of any Bill being debated in the immediate future.

This resulted in one public inquiry which was held during a sitting of the Senate making it difficult for Senators to discharge their duties to parliament, to the Senate Chamber and other Committee work and attend all sessions of the public inquiry.

This has resulted in government members of the Committee being unable to attend all of the hearings and leads a partisan and biased approach to the questions and accordingly limits responses from witnesses.

The conduct of the majority of the committee in calling meetings subsequent to the hearings at short notice and without sufficient notice and then allowing originally less than an hour for dissenting reports to be tabled, demonstrates the blatant political nature of these inquiries and the unfortunate unfairness of this committee led by a Green Independent Chair.

This is another inquiry which has been an absolute and blatant waste of taxpayers' money, of valuable and increasingly challenged Senate Committee Staff time, for an outcome which was predetermined and which sheds little new evidence, thought or debate to a question that has been in the public domain for many years.

For as long as the majority in the Senate continues to establish these sorts of inquiries, the high regard with which Senate Committee Reports were once held, will continue to diminish.

Senator the Hon Ian Macdonald
Deputy Chair