

**Supplementary Submission**  
on the  
**Marriage Equality Amendment Bill 2009**  
to the  
**Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee**  
by  
**Dr David Phillips, National President, FamilyVoice Australia**  
**18 November 2009**

At the hearing on Monday 9 November 2009, Senator Barnett asked several questions which I agreed to take on notice. In essence, the questions were as follows.

- Can you provide further particulars as to why marriage provides the best environment for raising children? Do you agree that a child coming into the world should have a reasonable expectation—all things being equal—of having both a mother and a father?
- Do you have any further evidence of the average duration of a same-sex relationship, the average duration of a marriage and the average duration of a cohabitating heterosexual relationship?
- There has been some debate about whether the Marriage Amendment Act 2004 breaches international human rights conventions. Do you agree or disagree and could you provide the reasons?

Senator Marshall invited me to respond on notice to some other questions:

- If same-sex couples were not seeking to bring up children, would you still object to them getting married just because they were in love with each other?
- What about heterosexual couples who do not get married, who have children and bring them up in loving, stable relationships. Is that different? Do people have to be married?

Senator Hanson-Young asked the following question:

- What is the disbenefit to the community of extending the institution of marriage to two men who are in a loving, committed relationship or to two women who are in a loving, committed relationship?

These and related issues are addressed below.

## **The nation has a vital interest in marriage**

Traditional marriage provides numerous benefits for the nation. Marriage encourages an adequate replacement birth rate and the best environment for raising the next generation of responsible citizens, who can contribute to society and provide social security to the elderly. Marriage civilises men and focuses them on productive pursuits. It protects women who have given up or postponed their careers to have children from being abandoned and harmed economically by uncommitted men.

These positive results of traditional marriage are not new. British anthropologist Joseph Unwin studied 86 cultures spanning 5,000 years and found that the most prosperous cultures were those that maintained a strong traditional marriage ethic. Every civilisation that abandoned this ethic by liberalising their sexual practices began to deteriorate, including the Sumerian, Babylonian, and Roman empires.<sup>1</sup>

Dr Unwin said that the energy holding a civilisation together is essentially sexual energy. When a man is devoted to one woman and their children, he is motivated to build, save, protect and plan for the future on their behalf. But when a man's sexual interests are dispersed - and when he has no children - then he lives mainly for the present moment and for self-gratification. When a "critical mass" of the population shares these selfish values, culture collapse is not far away.

## **Marriage best for raising children**

Children who are raised by their natural or adoptive married parents are likely to be much healthier than the children of divorced parents or the children of single parents who were never married. The evidence shows that being born into a happy marriage gives the average child great statistical advantages in health, happiness, future longevity and career success over children born into less fortunate circumstances.<sup>2</sup>

Divorce and unmarried child-bearing have negative effects on children's physical health and life expectancy.<sup>3</sup> The health advantages of married homes remain, even after taking socioeconomic status into account.<sup>4</sup> Even married parents who fight often have happier and healthier children than divorced parents.<sup>5</sup>

Kids just want Mum and Dad to be there, and if one of them (usually Dad) goes, his departure never stops hurting, and it never stops generating painful consequences.<sup>6</sup> And the health disadvantages associated with being raised outside of intact marriages persist long into adulthood.<sup>7</sup>

Remarriage generally does not help the children of divorce. Children in "blended" families are many times more likely to be the victims of physical violence or sexual abuse than children who live with both natural parents,<sup>8</sup> and they are far less healthy, happy and successful in the long run.<sup>9</sup>

Since cohabiting couples break up more frequently than married couples divorce, the risks to children of cohabiting parents are greater.<sup>10</sup> Studies show that children raised in families containing one non-biological parent are many times more likely to be abused than children raised by both biological parents.<sup>11</sup>

Same-sex partnerships are even more transient than heterosexual cohabitation and for this reason alone pose the greatest risk to any children involved. An important study of primary school children living in three family types - married heterosexual couples, cohabiting heterosexual couples and homosexual couples - suggests that children raised by same-sex couples may be at risk of academic underachievement, social problems and gender confusion.<sup>12</sup> Even more worrying are indications of an increased incidence of incest between minor children and homosexual parents of both sexes.<sup>13</sup>

## **Fragility of same-sex partnerships**

Some who argue for same-sex "marriage" say it will encourage homosexuals to adopt a safer, more monogamous lifestyle. They claim that allowing homosexuals to marry will not affect heterosexual marriage. However evidence from the Netherlands and Scandinavia suggests that both these arguments are false.

Dr James Dobson, Chairman of Focus on the Family US, has said: "Studies show that homosexual men in particular have a difficult time honouring even the most basic commitments of 'marriage'. A

study conducted in the Netherlands - a 'progressive' nation in which gay marriage has been legal for several years - found that the average homosexual relationship lasts only 1.5 years and that gay men have an average of eight sexual partners per year outside of their "primary" relationship. Does that sound like stable child-rearing environment to you? By stark contrast, 67% of first marriages in the US last ten years or more, and more than 75% of heterosexual married couples report being faithful to their vows."<sup>14</sup>

Children need more than just a mother and father role model - they need long-term stability. Homosexual or lesbian partnerships are far more transient than marriage, and hence less likely to provide the stable environment needed to raise children. Moreover a 2007 research report, *Homosexual Unions: Rare and Fragile*, shows that government recognition of same-sex relationships has not led to greater permanence.<sup>15</sup> The report states (in part):

*US activists have argued strenuously in recent years that giving homosexuals the legal right to marry will improve life for homosexual couples and will consequently benefit society as a whole. A new study of registered same-sex relationships in Scandinavia,<sup>16</sup> however, casts serious doubt on such assertions. Relatively few homosexual couples avail themselves of this revolutionary right - and a surprisingly high percentage of those who do so end up in divorce court...*

*The data for same-sex unions in Norway and Sweden indicate, however, not only that such unions are relatively rare, but also that they are remarkably fragile, ending in divorce significantly more often than do the heterosexual marriages of peers. The statistics indeed reveal "that the divorce risk for partnerships of men is 50% higher than the corresponding risk for heterosexual marriages and that the divorce risk for partnerships of women is about double (2.67) that for men (1.50)."*

*The researchers then re-examine the data in statistical models that take into account age, education, and other background characteristics, but these multi-variable models "do not alter the basic relation between divorce risks in different family types".*

*The German and Norwegian scholars acknowledge that "divorce-risk levels [that are] considerably higher in same-sex marriages" than in heterosexual marriages would not have been predicted by those who campaigned for the right of same-sex partners to have their relationships given "civil status" on the ground that such status would lead to "higher commitment ... and lower divorce risk". The researchers predict that "past relationship experience" is likely to cause "lesbians and gay men...[to] have lower expectations of relationship duration than will heterosexual couples".*

*In their concluding comment on their groundbreaking study - the first such study of "an unambiguously defined population of gay and lesbian couples" - the researchers emphasise the applicability of their findings well beyond Norway and Sweden. "Many of the demographic characteristics of our Scandinavian couples," they say, "resemble those found for other populations of same-sex couples, such as same-sex co-residents in the US ..."*

## **Risks for children in homosexual communities**

There is growing evidence that dangerous behaviours are significantly more common in homosexual and lesbian communities. Such behaviours can result in child abuse - physical, emotional or sexual abuse or neglect.

## ***Drug abuse***

Parents who abuse illicit drugs or alcohol, for example, are more likely than other parents to abuse their children<sup>17</sup> and tobacco smoking is associated with a significantly higher rate of health problems among smokers and their children.<sup>18</sup>

Researchers at New Zealand's Massey University found that homosexual, lesbian and bisexual people are significantly higher users of illicit drugs, alcohol and tobacco than the heterosexual community - thus increasing the risk that children raised by same-sex partners will suffer abuse.<sup>19</sup>

An article in *Massey News*, 1 July 2007, states (in part): "The disparity in rates of substance use have been found by Massey University researchers analysing data from the New Zealand Health Behaviour Surveys, commissioned over recent years by the Ministry of Health. The study showed that the gay, lesbian and bisexual population was more than twice as likely as the heterosexual population to have used marijuana over the last year; nearly four times as likely to have used amphetamines on a regular basis in the previous 12 months; more than four times as likely to have used LSD over a year: and more than three times as likely to have regularly used ecstasy over the same period."

## ***Physical health risks***

Research continues to show increased health and other risks in homosexual communities - risks which can affect the parenting abilities of same-sex couples.

A study published in the *American Journal of Public Health* in June 2007 found that almost two thirds of syphilis cases in the US are found in men who have sex with other men.<sup>20</sup> Another study in the journal used data from the 2002 National Survey of Family Growth with a study sample of almost 6000 women.<sup>21</sup> It found that lesbians are more than twice as likely as other women to be overweight or obese - and hence vulnerable to associated health risks.

Homosexual men are suffering increasing, disproportionate rates of anal cancer compared with heterosexual men. In the US, the number of people diagnosed with anal cancer has increased by nearly 40 per in a decade - in contrast to the overall increase in cancer diagnoses of only one per cent.<sup>22</sup> Moreover US men who have sex with other men have an HIV prevalence 60 times higher than the general population.<sup>23</sup>

## ***Mental health risks***

A 2006 paper by NZ researcher Dr Neil Whitehead notes: "Recent studies show homosexuals have a substantially greater risk of suffering from psychiatric problems than do heterosexuals. We see higher rates of suicide, depression, bulimia, antisocial personality disorder and substance abuse."<sup>24</sup>

Whitehead documents these studies, observing that suicide attempts by homosexuals are motivated by relationship break-ups rather than social stigma. The high prevalence of promiscuity in homosexual communities is likely to be a factor contributing to their high level of mental ill-health.

## ***Testimony***

Dawn Stefanowicz was raised in a homosexual household in Toronto, Canada, in the 1960s and 70s. She has given evidence about her childhood to the State of Massachusetts Judiciary Commission on 11 April 2006 and to other bodies including the US Senate Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs. Among other things, Dawn has testified:

*My mother was very seriously ill. From infancy I grew up with a homosexual father. I loved my Dad, but my father exposed me to [gay, lesbian, bisexual and transsexual] subcultures [which] did not have boundaries and principles of morality and monogamy... Even when my father was*

*in what looked like monogamous relationships, he continued cruising for anonymous sex... By age ten I was exposed to a gay nude beach, a sex shop and a cruising park.*

*My father had partners in the home from my infancy ... by six years old I was stuttering, blacking out and having nightmares caused by molestation, physical and verbal abuse and abandonment... At eight, two of my father's partners committed suicide... Alcohol, drugs, gay bars and parties were part of the scene... My father and his partners were involved in domestic violence and he dropped them like commodities. Males who were minors were at risk in my home of being preyed upon sexually...*

*My father could not show affection or affirmation to females, making me believe it was better to be a boy... I felt worthless and began seeking other boys' affections by age 12... Sado-masochism was alluded to and aspects demonstrated... My father died of AIDS aged 51... I know 14 children who grew up with a homosexual parent ... all of us have been negatively impacted long term.<sup>25</sup>*

## **Homosexuals are made not born**

Some witnesses who appeared before the Senate Legal and Constitutional Legislation Committee at the hearing on the Marriage Equality Amendment Bill 2009 on Monday, 9 November 2009, asserted that homosexuality is a natural orientation.

For example, Mr J Tuazon-McCheyne said: "Homosexual orientation, just like heterosexual orientation, is stable and fixed; it is something that has psychobiological causes and you become aware of it at some point in your maturation into an adult."<sup>26</sup> And Mrs Argent said: "Homosexuality is a natural orientation that is neither chosen nor caused by poor parenting, and it cannot be cured because it is not an illness. I always equate sexual orientation to eye colour and fingerprints. No-one chooses. We have to accept what we are given."<sup>27</sup>

However the available evidence is to the contrary. Unlike eye colour and fingerprints, homosexual orientation is not genetic. Nor is it stable and fixed.

Homosexual activists in the scientific community have been working overtime in their search for genetic causes for their behaviour. As each "born gay" study is debunked by more careful research, another pops up – sensationally reported by media eager to receive such news, but less eager to acknowledge later exposés of fake science.

Homosexual orientation has been falsely linked with everything from the size of part of the brain to finger length – and the "activist research" keeps coming.

Dr Qazi Rahman of the University of East London suggested that lesbians have a different "startle" response from heterosexual women when they react to loud noises. There are three problems with his research – very low sample size; independent analysis revealed no significant difference at all; and homosexual men have the same startle response as heterosexual men. But that hasn't stopped Rahman from enthusiastically promoting his theory in a book, *Born Gay?* which he co-authored in July 2005.

In 1993, biologist and homosexual activist Dr Dean Hamer of the US National Cancer Institute found that 33 out of 40 pairs of homosexual brothers had the same set of DNA sequences in a part of the chromosome known as "Xq28". However in the late 1990s a team of researchers at the University of Western Ontario found no evidence of any "gay gene" in homosexual men. Neurologist George Rice studied the DNA of 52 pairs of homosexual brothers and found that their Xq28 sequences had no more similarities than those which might occur by chance.

Moreover twin studies provide definitive proof that homosexual orientation is caused more by life experience (such as child molestation, family environment or a desire to experiment) than by genes.

Identical twins share identical chromosomes. If homosexual orientation, like eye colour, were caused by genes, a lesbian's identical twin sister would also be lesbian in 100% of cases – and likewise for homosexual twin brothers.

This is not the case. A 1991 study by Bailey and (homosexual activist) Pillard found that only 50% of identical twin brothers were both homosexual. Bailey repeated this study in 2000, avoiding the bias and small sample of his earlier research. He found where one identical twin was homosexual, the other was homosexual in only three out of 27 cases (only 11%) – proving that homosexuality cannot be solely caused by genes.<sup>28</sup>

The claim that homosexual orientation is fixed is not supported by the evidence of former homosexuals who have changed orientation.

- Former “gay rights” advocate Michael Glatze - founder of Young Gay America and editor of its *YGA* magazine - is no longer homosexual. In a dramatic interview with Art Moore of the online newspaper *WorldNetDaily* (WND) on 3 July 2007, Michael Glatze revealed that he had left the homosexual community in early 2006.<sup>29</sup>
- Glatze's public testimony followed that of another prominent “gay” magazine publisher who announced her change of lifestyle in February 2007. Charlene Cothran had been a lesbian activist for three decades. She had published *Venus* magazine for 13 years - with a circulation climbing to 38,000 among the US black homosexual and lesbian community.<sup>30</sup>

Dr Lisa Diamond, associate professor in psychology and gender studies at the University of Utah has done a longitudinal study of 80 same-sex attracted females and found that after five years one quarter no longer identified as lesbian or bisexual. Dr Diamond notes there is considerable anecdotal evidence that some lesbians have changed their orientation.<sup>31</sup>

## Same-sex couples and detriment to society

We have been asked some important questions:

- Why should same-sex couples who are not seeking to raise children be denied marriage?
- What detriment to society would result from allowing same-sex couples to marry?

Another way of putting these questions is this: Why should the institution of marriage not be redefined to accommodate same-sex couples, particularly if they are not seeking to raise children?

Our answer involves three vital elements of the nature and essence of the institution of marriage: (a) the purpose of marriage, (b) the nature of a social institution and (c) the national interest.

### *The purpose of marriage*

The primary purpose of marriage is to provide a stable, enduring, loving environment into which children can be born through the sexual union of a husband and wife and raised by them to become responsible mature adults who can make a positive contribution to society.

This primary purpose is well served by the historic common law definition of marriage now enshrined in the *Marriage Act 1961*: “the union of a man and a woman to the exclusion of all others, voluntarily entered into for life.” The principal elements of this definition are that marriage is:

- **a union** – that is a socially approved sexual union, not merely a domestic partnership;
- **between a man and a woman** – because natural conception occurs only in this way;

- **exclusive** – because the intrusion of an adulterous relationship undermines the marital relationship and endangers the welfare of any children, both through destabilising the marriage and increasing the risk of child abuse;
- **voluntary** – so that the marriage is based on love and trust and can provide a nurturing environment for raising children;
- **intended for life** – because children require both a stable home environment while they are maturing and family roots for a healthy sense of identity.

Same-sex relationships do not contribute to the primary purpose of marriage.

### ***The nature of social institutions***

Successful societies embody their common purpose and values through a shared commitment to social institutions. In his book *The Artifice of Ethics*, Professor Gordon Dunstan, of King's College, University of London, says that, to be effective, values must be woven into the fabric of society by creating institutions to embody them. Furthermore, institutions convey their values through **conventions**. Professor Dunstan explains:

*Conventions are **possible** because men are capable of moral insight, of agreeing in the recognition of moral insight, and of committing themselves to maintain it; they rest on a presupposition of fidelity to a common interest and purpose. Conventions are **necessary** because men fail conspicuously to follow their moral insights and are capable of ruthlessly exploiting one another in the pursuit of self-interest; they rest on a presupposition of infidelity to the community purpose.*

*I offer two observations on the **convention**... The first is that conventions do not rest on the sanctions of the criminal law. The healthier the society, the less it relies upon those sanctions – upon prosecutions, and courts, and punishment... My second observation is that conventions lay the emphasis in morals where it ought to be – that morality is first a common possession... Conventions ... form the network of moral communication in the community; they provide for moral consistency within a generation and moral continuity for the next.*

*Conventions embody **expectations**... In highly organized industrial societies we rely upon aircraft and trains being available according to time-table... Community life, too, has its established patterns of behaviour: we assume that we know what to expect of one another in roughly comparable situations. A large part of elementary social and moral education consists of training in the meeting of these mutual expectations.*

*Conventions ... also impose **limitations**. Social life as we know it rests on a set of tensions between the free person and the common good... On the one side we insist that persons are ends in themselves ... their interests must not be subordinated to any 'totality' or totalitarian structure... On the other side we aspire to a community in which all the members fulfil their own lives ... by contributing to the common life. Hence the first demand of community is limitation – an ethics which requires the limitation of self-interest where it conflicts with the interests of other persons or of the community itself.*

*Conventions ... result in **liberation** – liberation for the individual and the conditions of freedom for the community. An accepted convention of marital fidelity and some sort of domestic solidarity enables friends and neighbours to associate freely without fear of family disruption.*

The institution of marriage is sustained by conventions which embody expectations, impose limitations and produce liberation. The limitations imposed by the conventions of marriage include the exclusion of forced, consanguineous, adulterous, temporary or homosexual relationships.

## ***The national interest***

Every nation has a vital interest in fostering social conditions which sustain its population and its culture into the future. The institution of marriage has a central role in providing the best context for the next generation to be born and raised. Consequently, the nation has a vital interest in honouring, upholding and promoting the institution of marriage.

A nation that respects human rights and democratic freedoms allows its citizens to engage in a wide range of social interactions. These may include, flat mates, domestic partnerships, social clubs, sporting clubs and numerous other examples. With such social interactions, the national interest is limited to upholding freedom of association so that people are free to choose their involvement in civil society.

No question of national interest justifies the fostering of same-sex relationships.

## **International covenants**

FamilyVoice has been asked for our view on whether the Marriage Amendment Act 2004 breaches international human rights conventions.

Firstly, we assert that marriage emerges from the realities of human existence: that children are conceived naturally through the sexual union of a man and a woman; that children are highly vulnerable and need the protection of their parents for many years as they mature; that strong and stable societies are built on strong and stable families.

From these discovered realities, throughout history and in all successful cultures, marriage has involved the union of a man and a woman – not people of the same sex.

In ancient Greece for example, Homer wrote in the *Odyssey*: “There is nothing better in this world than that man and wife should be of one mind in a house. It discomfits their enemies, makes the hearts of their friends glad.”<sup>32</sup> In India, the timeless Hindu ceremony joining a bride and bridegroom in marriage “is the biggest, most elaborate, magnificent, spectacular and impressive of all the life cycle rituals in a Hindu’s life.”<sup>33</sup>

The Bible notes that at the beginning God created mankind male and female<sup>34</sup> and that a man should be united with his wife.”<sup>35</sup> Jesus Christ referred to these statements as the establishment of marriage.<sup>36</sup>

Consequently, when international covenants refer to marriage, we believe they are largely seeking to describe a discovered reality of human existence, not an arbitrarily constructed concept. This is exemplified in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948* (UDHR), Article 16, and in the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)* (to which Australia is a signatory) which states in Article 23:

1. *The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State.*
2. *The right of men and women of marriageable age to marry and to found a family shall be recognized.*
3. *No marriage shall be entered into without the free and full consent of the intending spouses.*
4. *States Parties to the present Covenant shall take appropriate steps to ensure equality of rights and responsibilities of spouses as to marriage, during marriage and at its dissolution. In the case of dissolution, provision shall be made for the necessary protection of any children.*



When the United Nations Human Rights Committee was asked to rule on whether this article should be interpreted to extend to same-sex couples a right to marry in *Joslin et al v New Zealand*,<sup>37</sup> the Committee stated:

*Given the existence of a specific provision in the Covenant on the right to marriage, any claim that this right has been violated must be considered in the light of this provision. Article 23, paragraph 2, of the Covenant is the only substantive provision in the Covenant which defines a right by using the term "men and women", rather than "every human being", "everyone" and "all persons". Use of the term "men and women", rather than the general terms used elsewhere in Part III of the Covenant, has been consistently and uniformly understood as indicating that the treaty obligation of States parties stemming from article 23, paragraph 2, of the Covenant is to recognize as marriage only the union between a man and a woman wishing to marry each other.*

We believe the Committee made the correct decision in interpreting the intended meaning of the Article in conformity with how it “has been consistently and uniformly understood”.

Consequently, we believe that the Marriage Amendment Act 2004 is consistent with the meaning of the ICCPR and that Australia is not in breach of international law.

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## Endnotes

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