

INQUIRY INTO SAME SEX MARRIAGE LAW IN NSW

Name: Mr Phil Browne

Date received: 16/02/2013

I attach a photo of me holding a family photo taken at my sisters wedding. In the photo are myself, my Dad, my Mum, my sister and my brother-in-law.

- All the people in the photo are hard working, law-abiding, upstanding citizens with good values, and they contribute to society.
- All the people in the photo are celebrating the joy of two people in love having their relationship recognised both legally and by the extended family, friends and society.

Sadly not everyone in the photo has equal rights under law.

- Despite being an upstanding citizen, I am denied the right to have my loving relationship recognised.
- My relationship is denied the validity given to couples by marriage.
- My relationship is denied the legal protections of marriage - e.g. hospital visitation rights if one partner is critically ill, legal certainty if a couple has any children, and legal/financial certainty if one partner dies.
- Why? - all because I happen to love someone of the same sex.
- My love for another man is identical to the love felt by opposite sex couples - so why the different treatment under law?

Everyone in the photo should have the same right to marry the person they love. Love is love, regardless of who you love, it is all the same.

I have been in love and know how special the love between two people can be. My family valued and respected my relationship with another man, and treated my same sex partner the same as they would if we were legally married.

When I am lucky enough to fall in love again, I want my country to allow me to marry the person I love.

This is important because I should have the same rights, and have my country treat me with the same respect and dignity as all other Australians. I should be allowed to marry, and my relationship given identical standing to the relationships of my parents and my sister.

My desire to have the choice to marry is supported by my entire community - my family, friends, work colleagues, and neighbours.

I can go out, find a woman I barely know and who I do not love, get married and immediately have all the rights and recognition of marriage - despite this being a sham.

However, if I cherish, adore, respect and love another man so much that I can not imagine a world without him - fulfill each other and love him so much that our love is greater than the sum of us - this is not recognised!!

Society is ahead of the govt and the government needs to catch up by legalising marriage equality:

- Polls show more than Twice as many people support same sex marriage as those opposed (64% Vs 30%). <http://www.australianmarriageequality.com/wp/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/GalaxyAug2012.pdf>
- Numerous other countries legalised same sex marriage when public support was less than it is in Australia - the world has not ended and people live their lives normally in these countries.

Inter-racial marriages, de-facto relationships (living in sin), inter-religious marriages, and divorce were all previously frowned upon and seen as a threat to society. Now these are all common place and accepted in society - just as same sex marriage will be. One day soon, society will look back and think what was all the fuss about with legalising same sex marriage.

Two people who love each other (regardless of their sex) and aspire to marry, being allowed to marry can only strengthen the institution of marriage.

- 53% of Christians support same sex marriage - Galaxy Poll August 2011
<http://www.australianmarriageequality.com/wp/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/marriagereligion.pdf>
- It is only a vocal minority of Christians who actually oppose same sex marriage.
- Some Ministers and Priests support same sex marriage and wish to marry same sex couples
<http://www.australianmarriageequality.com/wp/2012/04/02/20-multi-faith-clergy-call-for-marriage-equality/>
- Australia is a secular country - the Marriage Act is civil government legislation and in no way regulated by the church.
- Over 70% of Australian marriages are performed in civil non-religious ceremonies - not churches.
- Exemptions in a Marriage Equality Bill put forward, will mean Churches are not obliged to marry anyone they do not wish (divorcees, gays etc) - so this is no threat to the churches teachings.
- Allowing gays to marry will have no negative influence on the marriages of their heterosexual neighbours

I live in Queensland where we have seen the Civil Unions legislation watered down. Regrettably the federal govt has not complied with the wishes of the people, and has (for now) rejected marriage equality.

It's very important that states like NSW take the lead and show they are prepared to listen and comply with the community wishes to legalise marriage equality. This will then encourage other states and the federal government to legislate marriage for all Australians, regardless of gender.

I also attach a second picture showing two water fountains side by side, one marked "Whites" and the other marked "Coloured". Both water fountains provide identical water, however whites get a top-of-the-range fancy refrigerated water fountain, while the blacks get a crappy old non-refrigerated version. The photo is likely from the time of apartheid in South Africa when it was believed that Blacks were inferior and therefore it was justified in giving them less rights - e.g. segregated water fountains, sitting at the back of the bus etc.

This also signifies the distinction between a national Civil Unions scheme Vs full marriage equality for all citizens. The "Whites only" top-of-the-range fountain represents Marriage - the most sought after (and Rolls Royce) form of relationship recognition. Meanwhile the "Blacks" crappy old basic fountain represents Civil Unions - the "if we really must" form of relationship recognition.

Either you think gays are equal citizens or not. If fully equal then we deserve marriage - if you believe gays are only 2nd class citizens deserving of less rights, then you will support Civil Unions. It's that simple.



WHITE

COLORED

24

When someone says they support civil union but not marriage equality, they are essentially saying that gay people are inferior. That straight love is superior to gay love. Straight couples can enter this great, supreme, and divine union that is celebrated, while gays can only have a legal recognition that they are living together. It's an all or nothing road whether you think gays are completely equal or you don't. It's that simple.