

INQUIRY INTO SAME SEX MARRIAGE LAW IN NSW

Organisation: Elsie Women's Refuge

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Legislative Council Standing Committee on Social Issues
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
Sydney NSW 2000

To whom it may concern

Re: Marriage equality in NSW

We are in favour of marriage equality in NSW and hence same-sex marriage. Indeed, we believe that if the NSW Parliament has the ability to legislate to allow LGBT people to be equal, then it in fact has an obligation to do so.

Other states and jurisdictions on an international level have legislated for same-sex marriage, such as the United Kingdom, Spain, Canada, South Africa and some states in the US, to name just a few. NSW has the potential to be the progressive state in Australia and join the other international states and jurisdictions that recognise its citizens deserve equal rights when it comes to marriage.

Affording LGBT people civil unions instead of marriage does not suffice. Civil unions are not the same as marriage and only serve to further entrench discrimination. Refusing to extend marriage to LGBT people is the equivalent of saying that they are not worthy of it and treats them as second-class citizens, much like when Aborigines and women were not enfranchised.

Societal attitudes in Australia have changed towards same-sex marriage. A Galaxy Poll in 2012 showed that two-thirds of Australians support same-sex marriage.

As for marriage being religious – this is also incorrect – marriage is a secular institution presided over by the government. Not all couples choose to get married in a church and not all churches will marry couples – as is their right. But that doesn't preclude these people from marriage all together.

At Elsie Women's Refuge, we work with women and children who are escaping domestic violence. We also work with women who suffer from mental health issues that are exacerbated by existing discriminations against LGBT people. In the work that we do, there is already a social stigma attached to same-sex domestic violence which impacts negatively on domestic violence victims. Legal discrimination serves to further entrench these outdated cultural attitudes. We would strongly encourage the removal of any discrimination against these women and any impediments to forming a loving and committed relationship.



Elsie Women's Refuge

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