



LGBTI GROUPS JOINT STATEMENT ON THE PLEBISCITE

Wednesday 14 September 2016

As organisations and leaders of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) communities, we call on the Australian Parliament to ensure that every Australian is able to marry the person they love, in the country they cherish.

Making a solemn commitment to build a secure future with your partner, in front of your family and friends, is something that should be publicly celebrated. Declaring your commitment to look after your partner in sickness and health both cements your relationship through the rough times and shares your joys in the good times.

We make this call not only on behalf of LGBTI communities and their families who have been waiting for over a decade, but importantly to ensure future generations of LGBTI Australians can grow up on equal footing with their peers.

Two thirds of the Australian people, a majority of both houses of parliament and leaders of all major parties support marriage equality. We have never had so much support for achieving this small step towards every Australian having the same opportunities as their neighbour.

Our shared goal is simple – we want marriage equality as soon as possible at the lowest cost. The most efficient and effective way of achieving marriage equality is a vote in Parliament, a power confirmed by the High Court in 2013.

Marriage equality is about people, not politics. It is about the grandma who wants to see her granddaughter married in her lifetime, the parents who want to walk their children down the aisle, the children who wish to see their parents marry, and the many ageing couples who have endured inequality throughout their lives.

Our relationships, future happiness and security should not be used for political point-scoring.

We call on our political leaders to put aside partisanship and come together to find an achievable pathway for marriage equality, this term.

The Government proposes a plebiscite which we believe is unnecessary, costly and divisive, when the law can be changed through a straightforward vote in parliament. No Australian should have to witness



a national debate on their worth or the value of their relationship. We are particularly concerned about the psychological impact on our communities caused by repeated exposure to divisive national discourse – concerns that are based on research evidence.

Our expectation has always been that should a plebiscite proceed, parliament would ensure a fair and reasonable plebiscite process that recognises the impact of this national conversation. Unfortunately, the plebiscite machinery legislation now presented by the government is neither. Indeed it is unfair, unjust and unworkable:

- No government amendments to the Marriage Act have been provided as yet, nor are they guaranteed to come into effect following a successful Yes vote. It is unreasonable to expect the community and the parliament to vote on a plebiscite without first seeing the detail of what will be enacted upon a successful vote.
- It is unacceptable to use \$15 million of tax-payer dollars to fund the YES and NO committees, adding to the already extraordinary cost of the plebiscite. The proposal requires no truth-in-advertising test, yet will be seen as being endorsed by the Australian Government.
- The Government's bill will create an uneven playing field. Religious organisations already enjoy a range of tax benefits and concessions denied to other entities. Few LGBTI organisation have comparable tax deductibility status. Limiting tax-deductible donations to \$1500 for individuals will exacerbate this unfairness.
- The question is unnecessarily complex and the wording 'same-sex' fails to be fully inclusive of all LGBTI relationships. Media reports that the question has been crafted to improve the chances of a 'no' vote are troubling.
- The plebiscite package provides no strategies or funding to address the considerable concern about the impact of the plebiscite on LGBTI communities, our families and friends. We have already seen reports of LGBTI Australians distressed.

Given this, we call on parliament to vote down the plebiscite machinery legislation.

Additionally, we reinforce our call that these reforms should not be delayed due to the politicking of parties in Canberra. We call on all Members of Parliament of good conscience to work together to deliver marriage equality this term.

It is time. Let's ensure all Australian couples can equally have their love and commitment recognised through marriage.



LIST OF SIGNATORIES

(as of 14 September 2016)

ACON
Rowena Allen, (Gender & Sexuality
Commissioner, Dept of Premier & Cabinet,
Victoria)
Asian Australian Rainbow Alliance (AAuRA)
Australian Catholics for Equality
Australians for Equality
Australian Marriage Equality
Black Rainbow
Dameyon Bonson
Brave Network Melbourne
Brisbane Gay and Lesbian Business Network
Brisbane LGBTI Action Group
Carmen Rupe Memorial Trust
Florence Chen
Karen Christie
Meg Clark
Connect for Life
Dayenu
Susan Ditter
Diversity Launceston
DIY Rainbow
Anne-Marie Delahunt
Harley Dennett
Nathan Despott
Kate Doak
Maxine Drake
Suzanne Eastwood
Equal Marriage Rights Australia
Jamie Gardiner
GetUp!
Kelly Glanney
GLOBE Melbourne
Christine Healy
Brendan Heck
Aram Hosie
Mandy How
Corey Irlam
LGBTI Rights Unit of the Human Rights Law
Centre
Sharon Jones
LGBTI Legal Service
Lynne O'Brien
Oil Australia
National LGBTI Health Alliance
New South Wales Gay and Lesbian Rights Lobby
PFLAG Perth
Queensland AIDS Council
Rainbow Rights WA
Rainbow Families NSW
Sydney Gay Meditation Group
Sydney Gay and Lesbian Business Network
Transgender Equality Alliance
Transgender Victoria
Trikone
Uniting Network
Victorian AIDS Council
Victorian Gay and Lesbian Rights Lobby
Working It Out
Tushara Wickramariyaratne

