

## **Stand Up and Defend Marriage**

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**Parliament of New South Wales**

There is a view held by some people, one that I disagree with, that as night follows day it is inevitable that our law will change to permit same-sex couples to marry. Under current Australian law same-sex couples are not permitted to marry. Indeed there has been a lot of debate, discussion and activity around the issue, particularly over the last 12 months.

In September last year The Greens introduced into the Senate a bill that seeks to amend the definition of marriage in the Commonwealth Marriage Act. Under their proposed definition marriage would mean "The union of two people, regardless of their sex, sexual orientation or gender identity, to the exclusion of all others, voluntarily entered into for life". Debate on this bill was commenced but it has been adjourned. The bill sits there ready to proceed presumably when The Greens think they have got, or are getting close to, securing the numbers.

Two months later in November the House of Representatives passed a motion that said "That this House calls on all parliamentarians, consistent with their duties as representatives, to gauge their constituents' views on ways to achieve equal treatment for same-sex couples including marriage". Since then those advocating for change of the definition of marriage have been extremely busy lobbying both their Members of the House of Representatives (MHRs) and Senators. If you have any doubts about this I invite you to take a moment to visit the website of Australian Marriage Equality (<http://www.australianmarriageequality.com/wp/>). As you will note, a number of activities and initiatives have been launched to advance the cause of same-sex marriage.

On the 5<sup>th</sup> July this year a further motion was passed by the House of Representatives that, in summary, provides MHRs with the opportunity to report-back to the Parliament on the 17<sup>th</sup> August on the outcomes of their consultation with constituents on the issue of same-sex marriage. The motion is of course a follow-up to the one passed in November last year.

It is vitally important that those opposing the proposed change make their voices clearly heard by the federal politicians. I encourage you, along with others that you know, to contact your MHR and express to him/her your strong opposition to any proposal to amend the Commonwealth Marriage Act to provide for same-sex marriage. Ideally, you should seek to meet with them to discuss this important matter. Failing this, can I suggest that you write a letter to them? As you would be aware, politicians can receive hundreds of emails a day. That is why I am suggesting one-on-one meetings or hand-written letters. For information about who is your MHR, go to the Parliament of Australia website (<http://www.aph.gov.au/>) and follow the prompts. For information and material that you may find useful for your meetings or letters, visit the Marriage is website (<http://www.australianmarriageis.com/>).

It is particularly important that the report-backs on the 17th August reflect a proper balance of the views on this most important matter. This will only be achieved if appropriate effort is made to ensure that those views are expressed to our federal politicians. I encourage you to participate in this effort. You should also take active steps to get others involved.

Nobody should think that anything in politics is necessarily automatic or inevitable. It is time now to stand-up and voice loudly your opinion about protecting the definition of marriage as it currently stands in the legislation.