



Guy Barnett MP

LIBERAL MEMBER FOR LYONS

THE PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA - HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Marriage Motion Debate

WEDNESDAY, 18 November 2015 [6.31 p.m.]

Mr Barnett (Lyons) - Madam Speaker, the pain in their eyes was visible. The grief, sadness and sense of loss expressed by the donor-conceived individuals who were witnesses to the Senate inquiry into donor conception practices in Australia was intense. They told of their search for their biological parents to know their identity. These young adults were denied their rights to know the identity of both their mum and their dad. The sperm from an anonymous male ensured the link to their biological father was cut forever. There are apparently about 60 000 donor-conceived individuals in Australia today. The Senate committee, which I chaired, unanimously called for a prohibition on donor anonymity and the protection of the welfare and interests of donor-conceived children. The tragedy experienced by donor children offspring who were denied their genetic heritage and identity must never happen again.

Same-sex marriage would sadly perpetuate this tragedy by denying children the right to know and be nurtured by both a mother and a father, with no inherent right to a relationship with their natural brothers, sisters, cousins unless commercial surrogacy is legalised in Australia, which I hope it is not. Children deserve the right to grow up with at least the chance of a mum and a dad. Same-sex marriage would deny them that right.

I strongly oppose this motion because marriage is a bedrock institution worthy of protection. Marriage is an enduring institution, having been with us for thousands of years across cultures and across religions. Despite minor changes to the definition of marriage, it has always been between a man and a woman. It is a social institution which specifically benefits children and is designed to ensure their welfare is maximised. It provides for stability in society.

The public debate to date to redefine marriage and promote so-called marriage equality has been adult-centred. The rights of children have been neglected. The consequences of this relatively new paradigm are only now being revealed. Homosexual couple relationships have been recognised in law in most states in an official relationship register, something which I support. All legal discrimination at the federal level against same-sex couples was removed in 2008 when I was in the Senate with bipartisan support in Federal Parliament. It was appropriate in my view, but same-sex couple relationships do not constitute marriage.

In my view every child entering this world should have a reasonable expectation, all things being equal, of both a mother and a father. Of course this is not always the case. Accidents, tragedy and family breakdown are not uncommon, but marriage as the union of a man and a woman is an objective natural reality that reflects the biological and complementary nature of motherhood and fatherhood. If a homosexual couple wants a child, a third party has to be brought in.

The Greens motion, in my view, is a political stunt because marriage is currently defined as between a man and a woman under the Commonwealth Marriage Act 1961. Any changes to the definition of marriage can only be made at a federal level and are thus properly a matter for the Federal Parliament rather than the state Parliament. This has been confirmed by the High Court and countless legal counsel. A plebiscite has now



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been proposed to seek the views of the people on this matter and I encourage every Australian to stand up and get involved and make your voice heard.

Together with others, I worked hard to insert marriage definition into the act in 2004 when I was a senator. I was pleased to work with a wonderful and dedicated team as chair of the Save Marriage Coalition which helped successfully - and thankfully - to block a same-sex marriage bill being passed through the Tasmanian Parliament on two occasions.

I would like now to raise my serious concerns regarding freedom of speech and religion, already being compromised in the landmark case, in my view, against Archbishop Julian Porteous and the Catholic Church. This is not inconsistent with the consequences of same-sex marriage being legalised in some overseas jurisdictions. I was pleased today to table petitions in Parliament calling on this Parliament to remove section 17(1) of the Anti-Discrimination Act and have noted the Premier's response to look at the appropriateness of our current laws. In my view, this is a good initiative. Of course this allegation against Archbishop Porteous was promoted and supported by Mr Croome, Australian marriage equality advocate and the same person who in 2012 argued for same-sex marriage and criticised the Honourable Bill Cox, the former Governor and Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. He said:

This wasn't a carefully considered legal opinion from a knowledgeable legal expert. It appeared more like a homophobic diatribe from an out-of-touch old man.

What offensive and derogatory remarks. The same person said of the Launceston City Council regarding its position on same-sex marriage which he did not support:

The council has sent a message of intolerance and exclusion that disgraces the city and will put the lives of young gay people at risk.

They are offensive remarks and most disappointing.

The gay lobby is derogatory of those with an opposing view. We are accused of prejudice, bigotry, hate speech, being anti-human rights and being 'religious'. If you are purportedly religious or have a Christian perspective they say your views should be automatically discounted or disregarded altogether. The Christian community and those who support natural marriage have been insulted, offended and downright persecuted.

In conclusion, if same-sex marriage is passed, in my view we will enter a whole new era where gender will not matter anymore, where we will have an environment which undermines marriage itself, which will violate the rights of the child, turn on its head our understanding of parenthood and impinge in a very significant way freedom of speech and religion. The consequences to some degree are already known but there are many that are unknown.