



# Ten reasons not to redefine marriage in Australia<sup>1</sup>

## 1. Marriage is the union of one man and one woman

Throughout history in virtually all cultures and faiths throughout the world, marriage has been held to be the union of one man and one woman. Marriage existed thousands of years before our nation began and is defined in the Marriage Act 1961 (Amended 2004) as *'the union of a man and a woman to the exclusion of all others, voluntarily entered into for life'*. The UN Declaration of Human Rights (article 16) recognises that the family, headed by a man and a woman, *'is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State'*. It is not up to governments to redefine marriage – but simply to recognise it for what it is, and to promote and protect it as a unique institution.

## 2. Homosexual couples already have civil partnerships

All the legal rights of marriage are already available to homosexual couples through civil partnerships so there is no need to redefine marriage to include them. In 2008 the Federal Parliament amended over 80 pieces of legislation to remove any discrimination against homosexual couples in Commonwealth law. Marriage and civil partnerships have been designed for two very different types of relationship and should be kept distinct. Redefining marriage will not make homosexual and heterosexual relationships any more equal.

## 3. Redefining marriage will divide and alienate Australians

Legalising homosexual marriage to appease a small minority is wrong and it should not be foisted on the Australian people by a vote in Parliament or a decision by a small number of unelected judges in the High Court. Australia is a modern, diverse multicultural society. There will always be millions of Australians who for religious and cultural reasons will never accept a redefinition of marriage. In other countries where marriage has been redefined, freedom of religion which includes freedom of conscience and freedom of speech have been ignored in spite of assurances that promised otherwise. Any dissent is often silenced and punished by law. There is already a **huge amount of opposition to the move** and pressing ahead with redefining marriage will lead to considerable division and alienation of the population.

## 4. Marriage as God ordained at Creation is a mystical 'one flesh' union

In a free democratic society we accept that not everyone holds to a Christian worldview and belief. And so in the marriage debate, we often don't mention Christian beliefs which are seen as *"foolishness to those who are perishing"* (1 Corinthians 1:18). Even so it is very important that we as Christians appreciate

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from the Westminster Declaration 'Ten reasons not to legalise same-sex marriage in Britain' dated Friday, 24th February 2012

marriage as God ordained it to be at Creation. In the first chapter of the Bible we read that *“God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them”* (Genesis 1:27). The second chapter of the Bible sheds further light on the unique oneness in the relationship between man and woman. We read that *“God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man”* (Genesis 2:22). Adam’s words in this first meeting of the woman who God said would be *“suitable for him”* (Genesis 2:18) were *“This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh”* (Genesis 2:23a).

And so we take note here of the special creation of woman from man and that God Himself brought the man and woman together. In speaking to religious leaders who questioned him about divorce, Jesus affirmed marriage as God ordained at Creation saying, *“Haven’t you read,” he replied, “that at the beginning the Creator ‘made them male and female,’ and said, ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh’? So they are no longer two, but one flesh”* (Matthew 19:4-6a). We therefore see that God ordained, and Jesus later affirmed, this *“one flesh”* relationship between a man and a woman. The apostle Paul also quoting the words spoken by God writes *“‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.’ This is a profound mystery.”* (Ephesians 5:31,32a). Modern day theologians describe the profound mystery of a one flesh relationship between a man and a woman as a ‘mystical union’. In our defence of marriage let us therefore carefully take heed of the warning of Jesus in regard to the one flesh relationship. He said *“Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate”* (Matthew 19:4-6b). From a Christian belief perspective, the definition of true marriage therefore cannot be changed.

## **5. Protecting traditional marriage protects children and society**

God’s first mandate for the first man and the first woman was to *“be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth”* (Genesis 1:28). This speaks of the high purpose of procreation. Stable marriages and families headed by a mother and a father are the building blocks of society. Governments have a duty to protect the natural family in order that future generations will prosper. The Canberra Declaration states that the natural family resulting from marriage between a man and a woman *“has a proven track record of providing [children] with protection, education, welfare, support and nurture”* and that *“no other social institution has done so much good for people and for nations.”* Though death and divorce may prevent it, every child should have the best start possible raised by their natural mother and father. Whilst single parents or homosexual couples may do a good job in raising children, social policy has to be concerned with what is normally the case, and children have a right if at all possible to have a married mother and a father involved in their upbringing. Other models of the family have not been shown to have the same stability as traditional marriage. Homosexual marriage, in comparison with marriage, is an unproven and experimental social model.

## **6. Marriage is a unique biologically complementary relationship**

Any couple can share love and commitment but marriage between a man and a woman is the only legal union which can naturally lead to children. It takes both a man and a woman to produce a baby. The fact that there is a natural link between sexual intimacy and procreation is what makes marriage distinctive and different. In many cases, homosexual parenting already involves complicated surrogacy arrangements and the use of artificial reproductive technology. Redefining marriage would lead to increasing demands for greater access to surrogacy and artificial reproductive technology. There would be increasing pressure to remove Australia’s ban on commercial surrogacy. Today an increasing number of countries, particularly in Asia, are banning commercial surrogacy. Normalising the use of reproductive technologies creates a new “Stolen Generation” of children that are confused about their biological, social and family identity.

## **7. Redefining marriage will be complex and expensive**

Redefining marriage could cost billions and involve amending hundreds of pieces of government legislation. Redefining marriage means changing the *Marriage Act* to remove 'husbands' and 'wives'. It will take something that has served as a bedrock institution of every human society and redefine it. The word 'marriage' appears numerous times in Australian legislation which underlines the central role the institution plays in national law. Redefining marriage is a legal can of worms which cannot be achieved without changing the common and legal definition of the word 'marriage' and other words which define it (e.g. 'husband', 'consummation' and 'adultery'). These changes will inevitably change the definition and nature of marriage for heterosexual couples by trying to accommodate these two very different kinds of relationships under one legal umbrella. This is simply not a priority for government at a time of economic downturns as it will confer no new rights.

## **8. Schools will be forced to teach about the new definition of marriage**

Under existing education law, schools will be required to teach children that marriage can be between a man and a woman or between two men or between two women. This will confuse children whose parents may wish to teach them according to their own values and worldview. Those parents who object could be undermined in their children's eyes, stigmatised as homophobic and bigots and prevented from full involvement in schools. It will be a severe violation of the religious freedom of parents. The current Safe Schools Coalition Australia program created by the former ALP Government and now being rolled out across Australia by the Coalition Government already threatens to do this. Under the guise of the prevention of bullying in schools, the program seeks to normalise and celebrate the homosexual lifestyle. If this is taking place while homosexual marriage is still illegal what will it be like for parents and children if marriage is redefined?

## **9. Redefining marriage will not stop with homosexual marriage**

In Mexico homosexual marriage was followed by two year fixed-term marriage. In Canada legalising homosexual marriage has led to supporters of polygamy demanding in the courts for their unions to be recognised. If the legal definition is changed to accommodate homosexual couples other minority groups with a vested interest (e.g. Muslims, Mormons, Bisexuals and Polyamorists) will have a much stronger case to argue for the legalisation of polygamy and group marriages. The best defence against this is to keep the legal definition of marriage unique and distinct – 'one man, one woman, for life'.

## **10. Redefining marriage will lead to faith-based discrimination**

We have already seen a rising tide of discrimination against people who support traditional marriage as a result of the legalisation of civil partnerships coupled with new equality legislation. If marriage is redefined faith-based employers who provide special health benefits to married employees would be required by law to extend those benefits to homosexual 'spouses'. They would also face lawsuits for taking any adverse employment action – no matter how modest – against an employee who is in a same-sex marriage. Faith-based adoption and fostering services that want to place children exclusively with heterosexual married couples would be required by law to place children with homosexual 'married' couples. Marriage counsellors from faith backgrounds would be denied their professional accreditation for refusing to provide counselling to homosexual 'married' relationships. All these moves would place faith groups in the invidious position of being forced to act against their consciences or face marginalisation, exclusion and litigation and would further fuel social fragmentation, sectarianism, antagonism and civil unrest.