

CURTIN UNIVERSITY ALLY NETWORK



POSITION PAPER

MARRIAGE EQUALITY: WHAT IT MEANS TO US

For the purpose of this paper the term LGBTIQ is used in the most inclusive terms to encompass the diversity of people whose experiences make up the Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Intersex Queer communities.

Together with the University of Sydney Ally Network the Curtin University Ally Network wishes to express its strong support for marriage equality in Australia. Marriage equality is a fundamental recognition of human rights. The Network believes LGBTIQ people should be recognised as equal citizens and that consenting adults should have equal rights to participate in the institution of marriage if they so choose. The requirement that marriage be between a man and a woman does not reflect contemporary Australian values of respect, dignity and equality under the law. Neither does it reflect Curtin University's values of integrity, respect, courage, excellence and impact or commitment to diversity and inclusion. Curtin University has been a strong supporter of LGBTIQ people, attested through its Pride in Diversity awards for inclusion over several years.

In 2015 Curtin University signed up to the Marriage Equality Australia campaign together with 3,200 corporations, companies and organisations as current restrictions represent discrimination enshrined in law which cannot be the basis of a free and equal society. Such laws formally reinforce a perception of some citizens as being less deserving of access to a full range of rights and responsibilities. This harms LGBTIQ people and those who share their lives as partners, friends and family. Harming some citizens to the preference or advantage of others harms all members of Australian society. This is a matter of civil and human rights.

The Ally Network recognises that the experiences of LGBTIQ people encompass multiple perspectives on the idea of marriage as an institution. The Network also recognises the diversity and intersectionality of experiences and identities that exist within LGBTIQ communities. While the concept of marriage is not unanimously embraced by all members of the LGBTIQ community or the wider Australian community, the right to be able to be legally married for all couples is widely supported and accepted. Community polls indicate that acceptance of same-sex couples right to be married is over 60%.

LGBTIQ people are a vital part of Australian life and contribute to Australian society in a multitude of ways and their right to be married under the law should be celebrated not denied. Being silent on this issue is not acceptable, inaction on this issue is not acceptable, having our laws codify discrimination is not acceptable. The result harms us all. But it harms some more than others. Young LGBTIQ people often learn early that their lives and loves are not considered viable or valuable by society.

LGBTIQ people and their communities of support are resilient but are rightly worried that a non-compulsory, non-binding \$122 million dollar postal survey has unleashed confronting pockets of community prejudice, media vitriol and personal vilification. The lack of political leadership erodes the quality of public discourse on this issue, promotes discrimination and makes the lives and wellbeing

of LGBTIQ people and their families, more difficult. The current marriage law and the postal survey formalise prejudice that contravenes the spirit of Australian society and law. It is also without precedent for this issue; there was no such 'consultation' when the Marriage Act was amended by the Liberal government in 2004 limiting the definition to the 'union of a man and a woman'.

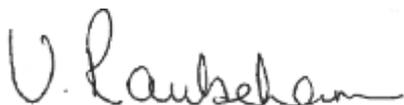
This current 'consultation' activity is particularly futile given that it is non-binding and likely to be non-representative. A postal survey excludes many people from 'having a say' especially those from transient and homeless populations, those that move frequently, are in remote locations, have limited access to technology or the ability to update their details or respond in the short timeframe. Lowered rates of participation, particularly along age and location lines, is a known by-product of this postal approach. A by-product that clearly undermines the stated intention of the postal survey to canvas the views of *all* 'eligible' Australians on the issue.

The postal survey has become as controversial an issue as marriage equality, functioning as a tactic of delay and distraction in the disguise of democratic process. The Ally Network calls on representatives of the Australian government to fulfil their role as elected officials. Govern on marriage equality. Vote in favour of marriage equality, both because polls show a majority of Australians support this approach and because you have duty to remove discrimination under the law.

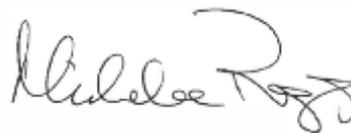
The Ally Network is committed to working with staff and students and the broader LGBTIQ community to counteract the negative effects of this campaign. We must ensure that Curtin University is a safe place for staff, students and the broader community – a place free from hate speech with access to additional support and services available for anyone who might be adversely affected by this process.

The Curtin University Ally Network declares its support for marriage equality. Marriage equality is a fundamental recognition of human rights. We condemn this postal survey but encourage everyone to participate and say 'yes'. Yes to equality of love under the law. Change is coming. Let's get this done.

On behalf of the Curtin University Ally Network,



Ms Valerie Raubenheimer
Executive Ally Champion
Curtin University Ally Network



Ms Michelle Rogers
Chair
Curtin Ally Network and LGBTIQ Advisory

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