



4 October 2012

Secretariat
Government Administration Committee
Parliament Buildings
WELLINGTON 6011

PETITION 2011/35
Marriage (Definition of Marriage) Amendment Bill

As at date of presentation to Parliament, 48,041 had signed a 'Protect Marriage' petition hosted on the protectmarriage.org.nz website.

The petition says:

**I support the definition of marriage in New Zealand being maintained as one man one woman.
I oppose any attempt to redefine it.**

Marriages are a matter of significant public concern, as the record of almost every culture shows. If it weren't for the fact that sexual intercourse between a man and a woman leads to children and brings with it a further obligation to care for those children, the notion of marriage would probably never have existed, and the state would not have been interested in it.

It is also important to note that marriage is not solely a religious belief. Marriage is a social practice and every culture in every time and place has had some institution that resembles what we know as marriage, associated with procreation. Every society needs natural marriage.

Marriage encourages the raising of children by the mother and father who conceived them. Marriage between a man and a woman says to a child that mum and dad who made you will also be there to love and raise you. Although death and divorce may prevent it, the evidence shows that, on average, children do best with their biological mother and father who are married.

As Prominent Irish homosexual and political commentator Richard Waghorn saysⁱ, this is certainly not to cast aspersions on other families, but it does underscore the importance of marriage as an institution.

It is true that marriage by definition is discriminatory. Marriage rightly discriminates. A 14 year old cannot get married. Three people cannot get married to each other. A person who is currently married cannot marry another person. A father cannot marry his adult daughter. A woman cannot marry her adult son. Both sides of this debate agree there should be limits to who can marry, even when the parties involved love each other.

As popular *NZ Herald* columnist Jim Hopkins writes –

"(Discrimination) happens all the time. If equality was Parliament's objective, there'd be no minimum drinking age, no ban on bigamy or specified drugs, no requirement to pass a test to get a driver's licence and no Maori seats either."ⁱⁱ

Equality does not mean we must redefine marriage for everyone.

If the law were to allow same-sex marriage, and only same-sex marriage, we would then be accused of discriminating against those seeking polygamous, polyamorous (group), or incestuous consenting adult unions – if all that counts is love and commitment.

Supporters of same sex marriage argue that civil unions are a 2nd-class type of marriage. But there are many same-sex advocates who argue against 'marriage' for same sex couples, and even suggest that the claim is hurtful to those who have deliberately chosen civil unions.

Many people in the homosexual community do not agree with same-sex marriage. Like us, they simply hold a particular view on an important social issue. This argument has nothing to do with hate or fear, as is wrongly charged by supporters of the bill, and everything to do with history, culture and tradition.

For many, marriage is more than just a legal agreement or social contract. We must consider the rights of people who have deliberately chosen marriage because of its cultural, religious and historical meaning. By changing its meaning, we would be trampling on the rights of a significant proportion of New Zealanders.

It is perfectly possible to support traditional marriage, while also recognising and respecting the rights of others. There is absolutely no need to redefine marriage to provide legal recognition and protection for committed same-sex relationships. In 2004, the government introduced Civil Unions and changed over 150 pieces of legislation to achieve this very thing.

Same-sex couples do have a right to form meaningful relationships – they just don't have a right to redefine marriage.

The state – which did not invent marriage – has no authority to re-invent it.

We wish to appear before the Committee

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bob McCoskrie', written in a cursive style.

Bob McCoskrie
National Director

ⁱ <http://richardtwaghorne.wordpress.com/2011/04/05/gay-marriage/>

ⁱⁱ http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz-government/news/article.cfm?c_id=144&objectid=10830645