

## **PRESS RELEASE RE SAME SEX MARRIAGE 20.11.17**

With the same-sex marriage postal vote behind us, we need to find a way that Australians can harmoniously exist with different points of view and find a way of reflecting that legally. It appears that the bill of Senator Paterson to do this will not be considered in the Senate because his anti-detriment provisions may have been too far reaching for some, even though he is a supporter of the yes vote.

“It seems to me that the rush to legislate is simply to get the pressure of the same-sex lobby off MPs. Indigenous people have not used the same aggressive tactics to get constitutional recognition and so are left standing at the altar of an Australia that is not ready to make them legitimate, even though they were here first,” said Mrs Barbara Miller, a Cairns pastor.

Treasurer Scott Morrison put it well when he said that we need a bill on same-sex marriage that takes in the views of 100% of Australians not just the 61% who voted yes. It’s important to note that they supported it in principle with a simple yes or no vote without knowing the actual shape of the bill or what its ramifications or unintended consequences might be.

Senator Dean Smith’s minimalist bill will not cut it as he has not made sufficient provision for issues of parental rights and issues of freedom of belief, freedom of conscience and freedom of speech. Religious freedoms also need to be considered and they can’t be put off till next year as they may never then get on the agenda. Just as the constitutional recognition of Indigenous people has been pushed further and further off the agenda, this could well happen with religious protections.

Mr Norman Miller, a Cairns pastor, said, “I did not have religious freedom extended to me as a pastor when I was endorsed as the ALP candidate for Leichhardt in 2012. I was disendorsed because I supported a traditional view of marriage and because of my support for the state of Israel, even though I had made no public statements about either issue and neither issue was relevant to the election campaign at the time. However I was sounded out on these issues by a senior ALP official before being disendorsed. (See *The Cairns Post* 5.2.13). So will religious freedom be extended today?”

There needs to be protection for schools, charities and religious organisations that have a traditional view of marriage and they should not have threats of withdrawal of funding, sacking of staff or other punitive measures exercised against them. Whether people have a traditional view of marriage, be they religious or not, should not prevent someone working as a doctor, lawyer or other professional or whether they can work in the public service, be an MP or be on the board of a company.

Federal same-sex marriage legislation that protects the freedoms of those who believe in traditional marriage should override state government anti-discrimination legislation so we don’t end up clogging the court system considering we have about 5 million Australians who believe in a traditional view of marriage.

Problems have arisen overseas re screening couples who want to foster children, for those who want to withhold their labour or not enter into commercial transactions that support same-sex marriage. Same-sex marriage will not be off the agenda as some politicians and others hope. Will we have businesses that cancel functions for Christian groups or groups that support a traditional view of marriage because of threatened protests from the LGBTIQ lobby as has happened a number of times in Australia already?

The UN's Human Rights Committee, in its sixth periodic report on Australia raised the issue of "lack of direct protection against discrimination on the basis of religion at the federal level." So Senator Brandis' move to incorporate the first clause of Article 18 of the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights into the bill put forward by Senator Smith is a move in the right direction. It states that "everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion."

However we support the proposition of Senator David Fawcett who led a parliamentary inquiry into a bill for same-sex marriage who says that all four clauses of Article 18 should be written in including the last clause re the "liberty of parents ... to ensure the religious and moral education of their children in conformity with their own convictions."

Let's look at the legitimacy of the decisions of the Turnbull government. Considering the number of MPs of various parties that were not eligible to sit in parliament but passed legislation, how long will it be before someone takes a court case against a piece of legislation, including the same-sex bill, saying that the MPs who voted for it were ineligible to do so? MPs are still in the process of checking out if they are dual citizens.

Signed: Norman and Barbara Miller Ph 0407128199, 0466076020