

MARRIAGE DELEGATION - Parliament House 25th February 2010

Strengthening and Supporting Marriage

The Marriage Delegation met with parliamentarians to present specific policies to support and strengthen Australian marriage and respond to the recommendations of the Senate and Legal Affairs Committee into the Marriage and Equality Amendment Bill 2009. The Marriage Delegation presented the Marriage Manifesto as its foundational blueprint for the development of public policy by government, to strengthen and support marriage in Australia for the common good of all, especially our children. Every point presented is worthy of action. We highlight four specific requests based on points 6, 7, 8 and 11 of “Stepping Forward Together – A Call to Action”, Marriage Manifesto p. 7-9.

1. Incorporate and teach the benefits of marriage, based on social science research, for children, women and men, in national curricula on relationships education, study of society etc. This will result in increased rates of marriage, successful marriages and will benefit our children.

2. Support marriage and parenting education by:

- a. Introduce tax deductibility for the cost of attendance at marriage and parenting programs.
- b. Introduce a \$200 voucher system for marriage preparation courses available to all couples planning to marry.

3. Pornography has a detrimental effect on men and boy’s attitudes to women by increasing violence against women, demeaning womanhood and having a toxic effect on marital relationships. Access to pornography has become much easier, making it harder for boys and men to avoid pornography.

Access to pornography could be curtailed by:

- a. Requiring mandatory filtering by ISPs of material classified X18+ or RC
- b. Using the customs power and the postal power to prohibit the import or distribution by a postal service of X18+ films (this would add to the ban on such films in indigenous communities in the NT – children in our suburbs are just as badly affected by exposure to X18+ material)
- c. Requiring all Restricted publications (Category 1 and 2) to be sold from adult only premises and more effective policing of breaches of the law.

4. Continue to work towards reducing the divorce rate by making Family Law more equitable for all concerned. The introduction of a presumption of shared parental responsibility into family law was a positive step forward in ensuring more children maintain a meaningful relationship with both their mother and father following divorce or separation. We reject the recent proposals to wind back or weaken this presumption and seek a guarantee that the presumption will be maintained as its stands.

Response to Recommendations by Senate and Legal Affairs Committee

Recommendation 1

The committee recommends that the Government review (by reference to the Australian Law Reform Commission, or some other appropriate mechanism) relationship recognition arrangements with the aim of developing a nationally consistent framework to provide official recognition for same sex couples and equal rights under federal and state laws.

1. The Marriage Delegation rejects this recommendation on the basis that this proposal undermines marriage and robs children of their biological birthright to a mother and a father.

Recommendation 2

The committee recommends that the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade issue Certificates of Non-Impediment to couples of the same sex on the same basis as they are issued for couples of different sexes.

2. The Marriage Delegation rejects this recommendation on the basis that this proposal undermines marriage and robs children of their biological birthright to a mother and a father.

Recommendation 3

The committee recommends that the Bill not be passed.

3. The Marriage Delegation applauds the Government, Opposition and Family First on their rejection of this bill as it robs children of their biological birthright to a mother and a father.