



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

Bishops Commission for Family, Youth and Life

“Don’t Mess with Marriage”

Re: Pastoral Letter from the Catholic Bishops of Australia to all Australians on the ‘Same-Sex Marriage’ Debate

Media Release
28 May 2015

As the debate about ‘same-sex marriage’ gains momentum nationally, the Australian Catholic Bishops believe it is important to highlight the meaning of marriage.

Given the implications of redefining marriage, today we are issuing a pastoral letter to the Catholic community.

You will be aware this week, in the context of the Irish referendum, both the Labor Party and the Greens have announced they will introduce draft legislation to allow two people of the same sex to marry.

Marriage is both a personal relationship between a man and a woman, and the protective institution for their children. Marriage includes an emotional union, but it goes further than that. It involves a comprehensive bodily and spiritual union of a man and a woman.

This union of a man and woman is the natural reproductive and protective environment for raising children. Marriage is the foundation of the family unit, which is in turn the first cell of society.

If the union of a man and a woman is different – *not the same* - as other unions, then justice demands that we treat that union accordingly. If marriage is an institution designed to support people of the opposite sex to be faithful to each other and to the children of their union it is *not* discrimination to reserve it to them.

The Christian tradition teaches that every human being is a unique and irreplaceable person, created in the image of God and loved by Him. Because of this, every man, woman and child has great dignity and worth which can never be taken away. This includes those who experience same-sex attraction. They must be treated with respect, sensitivity and love.

Redefining marriage in the way now proposed would see marriage reduced to a committed, affectionate sexual relationship between any two people. All marriages would come to be defined by intensity of emotion rather than a union founded on sexual complementarity and potential fertility. Husbands and wives, mothers and fathers, will be seen to be wholly interchangeable social constructs, as gender would no longer matter.

Chair of the Bishops Commission for Family, Youth and Life, Archbishop Anthony Fisher OP said, “It is unjust, gravely unjust, to legitimise the false assertion that there is nothing distinctive about a man and a woman, a father or a mother; to ignore the particular values that real marriage serves; to ignore the importance for children of having a mum and a dad, committed to them and to each other for the long haul.

Children have a right to grow up with their natural mother and father, where possible. We should not be redefining marriage so as deliberately to exclude a child growing up with either their mother, their father, or both their parents.

“If the civil law ceases to define marriage as traditionally understood, it will be a serious injustice and undermine that common good for which the civil law exists.

“Surely there are other ways of honouring the friendships of same-sex attracted and other people without further deconstructing marriage and the family,” Archbishop Fisher said.

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Resources: [What is marriage ebrochure](#)